

DEVELOPING HARMONY IN THE
CHURCH AS IT RELATES TO
ORDAINING WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

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by
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The context is St. John's in Larimer, Pennsylvania. The problem of this project focuses on *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women*. The researcher wants to find out why women are not ordained at similar rates as men. The hypothesis is if the researcher studies what hinders women seeking ordination, then the study will provide understanding for developing harmony relating to ordaining women. The methodology included Surveys, Bible Study/Teaching, and Questionnaires using random approaches for six weeks. This study provides a model for developing harmony in the Church as it relates to ordaining women.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Someone once said books are never the result of one person's work but rather a combination of data, material, and the endearing love of many. Therefore, let it be said

I offered thanks to those who walked alongside me, beginning with my editor, Dr.

Mary Louise Walker, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude as she first offered encouragement and expert editorial work. Dr. Walker, you are the answer to prayer.

Someone once said that a friend indeed is a friend. I dreamed of this day coming, but you brought the dream to reality. Thank you.

There indeed stands a great crowd of witnesses; United Theological Seminary where I became a part of the Prophetic Preaching Praxis. The faculty and mentors in this phenomenon group of preaching giants is a force to be reckoned with, beginning with Drs. Kenneth Cummings, Robert Walker, Brenda Braam, and A. Tolly Kennon. I extend a deep and grateful thank you to each one of you. The P 3 Cohort is the best. May God continue to richly bless and use each of you in this ministry context.

I offer a sincere thanks to all my family and friends beginning with my eldest son, Todd J. Hollis, Esq. Todd renewed my life that I might live to see this glorious day commencing with the highest degree of the Church, the Doctor of Ministry. I love and appreciate you for your unselfish gift of life. If it had not been for you, this third magnificent degree would not have been possible.

To all who prayed and participated in the project of Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women beginning with Dr. Viola Martin, my cousin, Michelle E. Garland, my nephew, Davon McMillian, my colleagues: Reverend Dr. Bobby Seepersaud, Reverend Dr. Cynthia Thompson, Reverend Dr. Rose Irwin, Reverend Dr. Marco Tinor, Reverend Paula V. Cooper (Zambia), Reverend Patrice Fowler Searcy, Reverend Lea Tunstalle, Reverend Bobby James Smith, Reverend Dr. Sedaric Dinkins, Reverend David Ackerman, Mrs. Catherine Bowser, Reverend Dr. Mary McWilliams, Reverend Denise Wiggins, Reverend Robin Boozer, Reverend Rentonia Moore, Reverend Dr. Lee Fields, and Reverend Dr. (Bishop) L. Stevens, and the Reverend Eshaka Sobukwe, I thank you.

Thank you to those who faithfully joined in the audience to offer their support: Dr. Robert Walker and Dr. Mary Walker, Reverend Yvonne Burns, Reverend Meredith Hutchison, Reverend Dr. John Welch, Mrs. Beverly Weston, Mrs. Audra Walker and Ms. Gina-Noel Brown, Ms. Virginia Beck, Ms. Monica Allen-Chapman, Mrs. Collette Jackson, Mrs. Weynette Tarply and my cousin, Mrs. Pamela King. Some wanted to be with us but had technical problems connecting with Zoom. To you, I offer my apologies, gratitude, and love.

DEDICATION

To Troy J. Hollis

My second son, Troy, whose sweet and faithful service was given to me as we traveled back and forth to United Theological Seminary over the past three years. Thank you for riding “Miss Daisy,” me, to and from, here and there, while I pursued this Doctor of Ministry Degree. Troy, I do not take a son’s duties to his Mom for granted.

Love you,

Mom

.

ILLUSTRATION

Figure 1

1. Epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa 1985-2003.....ix.

ABBREVIATIONS

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
DMin	Doctor of Ministry
MDiv	Masters of Divinity
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PCP	Primary Care Doctor
QR	Quick Response Code
RSV	Revised Standard Version
UCC	United Church of Christ
UMC	United Methodist Church
WAMA	Westmoreland Association Ministerial Association

She makes linen garments and sells them and supplies the merchants with sashes. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful is on her tongue.

—Proverbs 31:25-26

Scripture passage chosen by Michelle E. Garland, my cousin
and Assistant, Yadah Yadah Prayer Group, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

There is power in the blood, and His wondrous working power is in the blood of the Lamb. The project, *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women*, brought the brutal story of discrimination and the lack of women being elevated to pastoral leadership to the full church circle.

The reality is that here in North America, racism and discrimination are tied to not only society but, more importantly, the Church as it divides and subdivides its people when it comes to the roles men and women play. Christianity takes the Hebraic code with its Torah and the Laws of Moses as its foundation. Yet, for the Protestant Church, these religious laws and codes vaguely apply to those who are called Christ-followers, Christians.

For people of color, the subject of racism continues to draw blood theologically and physically. Since antiquity, women serving in leadership positions in the church have battled with the lack of inclusion with this issue. The scribes began the process, yet they could only follow what they felt and believed was true even if it brought harm. This fact has left a dark cloud over God's church. The believers, the body of Christ, the innocent, rely on the Church and its shepherds for guidance and direction.

The pericope, Mark 5:25-37, is designed to address these inequities and thereby bring the subject of one woman's silent suffering to light. Prayerfully, yokes will be broken in the morning, and chains will be loosed. The Markan pericope has the power

from on high to do the very thing Jesus empowered his disciples to do when they are prayed up and have fasted. The ultimate prayer is that the faith of the masses, women preachers, will be offered the righteous place they have worked so hard to attain; ordination.

For this reason, this project took its place among the volumes of books written about women and their inability to be seriously taken when it comes to positions of high authority. This researcher was compelled to prove God's servant ministers are equipped and ready to bring about the needed changes where all people of God (regardless of discrimination) will not have to face discrimination which undoubtedly brings disharmony.

Society moves with the times, unlike institutions such as the Church. Church history is laden with patriarchal biases that hold both men and women back. Those who hold authority in the church many times hold on to these biases without full knowledge of to whom and to what it may have applied.

With this project of *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women*, and having volumes of work published by women to glean from, this research offers a fresh, wholesome study that dares to challenge the powers that be.

To present a project with the notion that yes indeed, the Church of God can appreciate both its men and women had yet been pursued. Nevertheless, the ability to see change does exist. With this project, others may agree that God's church can improve through this form of unification. And then with prayer and faith coupled with God's favor, Christendom as Jesus once said to the women with the issue of blood, "Daughter your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease (Mark 5:34)."

The purpose of the pericope for the participant teaching and preaching will undoubtedly change their preaching and teaching styles. Still, the main thrust of the subject, the woman with an illness for twelve years, will be presented through the varied lens of each preacher and teacher.

The Word of God is said to be active and sharper than any double-edge sword. “It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints, and marrows; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything was uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 5:12-13).” The late Howard Thurman posed the question, “Why is it that Christianity seems so impotent to deal radically and therefore effectively with the issues of discrimination and injustice based on race, religion, and national origin.”¹

Tokenism and misogyny are two tools used to dissuade women; those who are academically equipped for ministry and called to serve the church of God are vulnerable. Unfortunately, those tools are used wherein students of the Word and Sacrament are placed in rural or desolate ministries where their faith and loyalty are tested. Because of other wickedness in high places of misogyny and tokenism, many women find themselves serving a male preacher as his assistant than serving God as His servant.

With this project of *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women*, and having volumes of work published by women to glean from, this research offers a fresh, wholesome study that dares to challenge the powers that be.

¹ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, Beacon Press, 2012), Introduction.

Chapter One consists of the Ministry Focus. In the beginning, was the phenomenal Spiritual Autobiography paper. This paper asked the critical questions, who is the author, and what do you expect to gain from the Doctor of Ministry Program? The program then suggests that the author reflect and reminisce on the dream behind the inspiration that guided the author to United Seminary. After writing the answers to the above questions, the author saw the project differently. No longer was this idea to return to the seminary for an advanced degree, the Doctor of Ministry, a dream, but now a reality.

Chapter Two, researching the Biblical Foundations Paper, became a bit of a tug not only on the heart but the researcher's head. Here, the project takes shape through a biblical passage or pericope lens. The Bible is full of interesting subjects about men, yet it is bereft of stories that talk about God's women.

As I sought to find a character from the Bible to support the need for developing harmony in the church and the lack of inclusion for women in ordained ministry, the anonymous woman in Mark came to mind. This unnamed woman was not only cut off from society with her issues but, more importantly, shunned from the church. God put the Markan text within "ear and eyeshot" to be studied for growth and harmony both to the church and the world. Recognizing the strict Mosaic Laws and household codes helped build a strong case for the lack of inclusion of women in ordained ministry.

Chapter Three, the Historical Foundation for this project, envisions the same kind of history where it can be discussed rationally and hopefully to bring healing to the areas of brokenness and disharmony to women being ordained. Unfortunately, the church has historically excluded women in ordained ministry for far too many years.

Chapter Four, the complexity of preparing the Theological Foundations Paper, took on a sense of stress knowing that these papers, once submitted, would be discussed at great length in the Candidacy Review. Theologically, the very notion that God is in the plan and, as one of the mentors added, “Trust the process.” This research brought out another side of God’s people. Many great writers across philosophies, feminists, womanists, great men, and women of God are looking to rid the world and its churches of discrimination and exclusion to women in ministry.

Chapter Five, the Interdisciplinary Paper, took on a sense of stress knowing that these papers, once submitted, would be discussed at great length in the Candidacy Review. There are many great writers; feminist, womanist, great men and women of God looking to rid the world and its churches of discrimination and exclusion to women in ministry.

Chapter Six, the Project Analysis, is the final chapter that includes a culmination of the project. The project, *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women*, proved itself worthy to implement. The project’s presenters did excellent jobs exegeting, teaching, and preaching the Markan text, Mark 5:25-37. Today, when God’s voice is spoken in righteousness, without condemning one class or the other, it is then possible to work –side by side in God's church’s most critical places, from the board room to the pulpit, showing that this project can be replicated.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

It is a reality that America has a history of racism. Yet, in these past four hundred years, African Americans and Euro-Americans have to find the path that would lead to healing and racial harmony. Racism is a public health issue in a recent study done by the University of Pittsburgh's report, "Pittsburgh's Inequality across Gender and Race."¹ The subject of racism has far-reaching tentacles for Blacks. Racism has stirred men, women, and children to anger, leaving them weeping over its lack of fairness and honesty in all areas of their lives: economically (employment), physically (healthcare), mentally, housing, educationally, spiritually (soul), and morally.

In the preface of his book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Howard Thurman asks the question, "Why it is that Christianity seems impotent to deal radically and therefore effectively with the issues of discrimination and injustice?"² As a Black female pastor working in a predominantly German reformed culture, the researcher proposed a ministry project and thesis. The nation is talking more about Black Lives Matter, police brutality,

¹ Junia Howell, Sara Goodkind, Leah Jacobs, Dominique Branson and Elizabeth Miller (2019) "Pittsburgh's Inequality across Gender and Race," Gender Analysis White Papers: City of Pittsburgh's Gender Equality Commission.

² Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, Beacon Press, 2012), Introduction.

and how to dismantle racism more than it has ever done in the past four hundred years. It is, therefore, important to “strike the iron while it is hot.”

The Westmoreland Association of Ministerial Association (WAMA), in conjunction with the Penn West Conference of the United Church of Christ through a conversation led by two of its members, presented an idea to address racism and white privilege. To that end, WAMA agreed to read Debbie Irving’s book, *Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Racism*.³ Irving’s book is a model of one white woman’s perception of White privilege, and what racism looks like from someone “out of touch” with reality. Irving is a college professor, now highly sought after to speak out against racial injustice. In this first book, she adopts the position of a naïve Euro-American brought up in a “sheltered” culture full of racial bias and ignorance. Irving writes of never being exposed to black people in her New England hometown or culture. What a shock when she learned the truth about the myths of the Slave Trade history and the lies associated with the indigenous people of Africa. This awakening for Irving opened a plethora of misunderstandings supported by the evils of a society that challenged her ideological, theological and psychological, values.

The results for Irving took her from ignorance and shame to become a national social justice teacher and speaker on the subject of racism with the hope to remove the stigma and bring understanding and harmony out of layers of pain and shame to the African American people. Unfortunately, racism in the United States is a stumbling block for the Church Universal, where it got its beginning. Blacks have been demonized,

³ Debbie Irving, *Waking up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race*, eBook, *waking up_white_study_english, pdf*.

dehumanized, and misaligned by this country whose men claimed to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of their lives. Through her book, *Waking up White*, Irving opened the pathway to this country's ugliness of racism. But, unfortunately, this ugliness of racism is so pervasive. Its result is like what cancer does to the body, attacking cell by cell, leaving just a shell on "life support."

Abraham, the patriarch, the father of faith, is not only father to the Christians, the Muslims, and the Jews, but father to innumerable people: "The Lord told Abram to look now toward heaven and count the stars if you are able to count number them (Genesis 15:5)." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be (Genesis 15:5)." The story of Abram's life retold in the book of Genesis shows how important Abram was in God's plan of redemption for the Muslims, Christians, Jews, and the "whosoever will; all those who call him Father of their faith (Genesis 15:5)."

Though highly sensitive and clumsy to discuss, the topic of *Developing Harmony in the Church as It Relates to Ordaining Women* can become one of the most gratifying developments for the Western Church. Martin Luther King, Jr. used the Black Church with the backdrop of the Emancipation story laced with discrimination and slavery to re-introduce this subject of developing harmony for his Civil Rights platform. King addressed the inequities and social injustices for the Black man everywhere but particularly in the South. King talked about a "Beloved Community," a future where they would live out their lives appreciating all the same privileges granted the White man. Out of King's efforts came an insurmountable amount of support across the country, including sympathetic Whites from the North. King's "nonviolent" movement changed African Americans in the South and all people of color throughout the Western world.

King marched all over the South, spreading the Word, “Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome someday.” “We Shall Overcome Someday.” The researcher relived that feeling of pride while walking with the Prophetic Preaching Praxis Focus Group colleagues across the Edmund Pettis Bridge into Birmingham, Alabama;⁴ smiling King’s dream is my dream. The researcher prays that the Church regurgitates, throws up, and empties that demonic nightmare Blacks have had to live with and “Let My People Go.”

The General Synod, the ruling body of the United Church of Christ, with its 5,115 congregations, recently released a document showing that they are in concert with Black America against social injustice and racism. They stepped out on faith to make good the words taken from Exodus 9:1, “Then the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell them, Thus sayth the Lord God of the Hebrews, “Let my people go, that they may serve me.” The UCC Minister for Racial Justice, Rev. Dr. Velda Love, tirelessly advocates for racial justice to eradicate racism and bias. The researcher believes with the support of the General Synod (the wider Church), our small group discussions may just be the right vehicle for developing a praxis for developing racial harmony and understanding.

Reading Irving’s *Waking Up White* as a devotional led to our small group forum shaping and developing the researcher’s thesis of *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women*. After meeting in a small group a few times, a newcomer asked, “Why is this subject so important? With the researcher’s head spinning and the sour taste of disharmony in my mouth, the researcher heard the Conference Minister offer

⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why we can’t Wait* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1963), 554.

his response. The Conference Minister stood up and opened by telling the group about his recent visit to a conference of UCC preachers in Birmingham, Alabama. With a “cracked voice,” the group heard him offering an apology first for his ancestors. After he set the tone for our time together, the researcher realized how important it is to address these questions, “So, where do we go from here.”⁵ What do we say to the one who just does not get it? Or, how does one convince the person who rhetorically says with such pride, “How does this affect the church?”

The researcher’s objective for this project will address three striking questions: 1. Why is this subject so important? 2. The researcher posited, “Did I ever think I was a racist?” 3. What are you asking the Church to do with this subject?” The critical factor and perhaps the most crucial point is that the end project clarifies a problem that plagued millions of Black Americans; why is the Black man still not free?

To answer the first question: Why is this subject so important? Racism is a reality. Black people are not asking for justice out of a vacuum or self-righteous pathos. With our small group, we initially covenanted to be honest and respect each other in our conversation and seek to learn through opening up this subject on racism for healing and harmony first with each other and then for our churches. First, the small group addressed the “elephant” in the room, recognizing a problem with white privilege; all men do not have the same rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As a body of faith, do we all recognize that some do not know the African American history of the slave trade? As a body of faith, we can discuss the Slave Trade of the British in the 1600s.

⁵ James Washington, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr., Where do we go from here? Chaos or Community?* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1986), 214.

The second question that looms over this body is the classic remark, “I never thought that I was a racist.” Oddly enough, no one wants to admit that they are all in some way prejudiced. No one wants to disclose or share the truth of prejudice and racism that weigh us all down. Irving talked about White privilege and her Euro-American birth. When Irving woke up that day and recognized that she was white, this awakening opened many “dark” thoughts. Irving mentioned how she lived in New England. She accounted for a life of normalcy; (read the book and decide for yourself what to expect) where they went to their beachfront home every year for a vacation. Dad packed the family up in their station wagon, and off they went. Dad did a tour of duty in the military, which afforded him the benefits of purchasing their first home on the G. I. (Government Issue Bill.) Dad’s service credited him with a free college education from that same coveted G. I. (Government Issue) Bill. Dad became a successful attorney.

Oddly, Irving believed having a station wagon as a second car was “A” typical for all white families. Mom (a stay-at-home matriarch) was a graduate of Smith College but somehow knew nothing about Black people. So when the fateful day of waking up white struck Irving, she must have felt the “Call” as many of the Old Testament prophets did, “Here I am Lord, use me (Isaiah 6:8).”

Now, to address the third question, “What are you asking the Church to do with this category? “This question is multi-faceted and entirely open-ended. Every day the researcher was found questioning, what will the Church gain when this project is complete? The researcher will need more time to answer this fully.

By being an optimist, there’s hope that just maybe the same as King once said, “Time is not on our side.” Time can be costly for those who have had to endure social

injustices. While looking back, it was the Church that held the community together. As a faithful church member, the writer looked to the Church for wisdom and guidance. Being naïve, the researcher never came to this painful place in the road that in 2 Chronicles 7:14 spoke of: “If my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” Barriers will come down, healing will occur, and true worship will restore the Church when we call on the Lord.

It is no secret that African Americans enjoy “full experiential” services. Perhaps if the people had to explain the worship service, many would say it is an experience, a time to fellowship in a haven where the worship service will leave your worries at the threshold, enter into not just a building, but the place where God’s Holy Spirit dwells. The Church for the African American is where you can leave the baggage weighing you down all week on the other side of the door.

So what the researcher expects from the Church is what all people should do in God’s Church; lay their burdens down and worship in Spirit and Truth. African Americans want respect for who they are in Christ Jesus. If African Americans stoop to be separated by the color of one’s skin or by the material things of this world, then self-harm is done. The Negro’s story is of resilience demanding work ethics, and the moral character that they held to despite what the White man did to them. That ethos is the model of character we believe will carry us for many centuries to come.

When people wake up in the morning, comparing one’s waking up to Irving’s (if my morning regime can be applied here), the researcher gets up first, yawning from a long restless night. Then, after shaking off the sleepiness, the researcher offers thanks to

God for waking her up in her right mind. Then, the researcher jumps to her feet and walks to the window to give God praise.

The first thought of the researcher is not what the White man did to the researcher's ancestors. No, the researcher did not get up with a vengeance on the heart or how to go about counteracting the evils done hundreds of years ago. No, today the researcher says, "This is the day that the Lord has made, I am going to rejoice and be glad in it (Psalm 118:24)." The researcher gets ready for the day with just one thought; thank you, Jesus, for another day.

Oddly enough, the researcher did not have to look in the mirror to be reminded that the researcher is a Black woman. The system does an excellent job of that without any help. Suppose this is when the researcher is depositing a check of more than \$100.00. In that case, the researcher knows to deposit it because the teller will have to go and talk to a supervisor, look at the balance in my account, and remind the researcher that the check is too large to withdraw until it has cleared the bank's two-day policy. The bank teller must remind (even though the researcher has been a good customer for over five years) of the bank's policy. Suppose the researcher has an appointment with the PCP (the primary care doctor whose staff knows the researcher). In that case, the researcher must remind the young receptionist when she comes out to greet the researcher in the waiting room not to be called by the nickname Judi. The researcher answers to Miss T., Mrs. T., Reverend T., or Ma'am; somehow, that seems to ask for too much. Now, suppose the researcher was going to look for a car, buy a house, or happen to be in a neighborhood where the population of Blacks is zero. In that case, the researcher will need to either have a White friend to validate the researcher's presence or wait, walk around or sit

twiddling fingers until someone happens by. Racism is not new. It has been around for so long, and all that is believed that can be done from this project is to hope and pray that since it started at the Church, it will be the Church that has to develop racial harmony and understanding in congregations to bring it to its end.

Irving's book doesn't address any of these problems, although it is understood why. She is still trying to work through *Waking up White*. The researcher googled her name and watched herself speaking to a body of students at Columbia University. The author asked the convener, a colleague, what other ways can the subject of racism be explored to enlighten our small group?

The researcher fears losing those who have shown a genuine interest and desire to work through to bring healing and transformation to the Church. However, suppose people are honest with themselves and allow the Holy Spirit to intervene. In that case, that experience can have a powerful impact on our churches, for that is where reconciliation and healing are inevitable.

What the researcher is asking the Church to do, comes out of the Ten Commandments (Mark 12:30-31, RSV); "And you shall Love the Lord your God with all your heart" and secondly; "You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37, 39)." These same Christian precepts are the backbone of the principles carried into writing our laws and Constitution.

With all these things seen in the backdrop, with prayer and the help of God, this project can bring healing and restoration to the Church. No project or thesis will eradicate racism. The researcher's colleague, the dreamer, chose this small group to put the question of White Privilege before them. Together, this small group is recognized as

preachers and are all called Christian servants to “love” our neighbor as ourselves. The researcher’s strength is restored knowing that this project now has feet, arms, legs, and a mouth to defeat the enemy when the enemy raises its ugly head to kill the Spirit of healing and understanding needed for this project to succeed today. The researcher is going to trust the process.

At the close of the session, the author’s colleague reminded us; we can do nothing on our own; we must leave room for God. The colleague’s words were priceless. The researcher now has a title for the thesis that is doable; *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women*.

WAMA covenanted to work together toward racial harmony. Together Paul encourages from afar, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).” We are making great strides. I am optimistic. I know that breaking down walls that were once put in place nearly four hundred years ago will not easily fall. Our table is open, everyone that has partaken of the fellowship thus far, and those who ventured out into the deep have learned too much ever to turn back or complain; “You brought us out here to kill us (Exodus 16:3).”

Our small group was scheduled to continue reading Irving’s book through to the end. After that, the small group planned to stop for reflections from the group. There will be three questions in the time of reflections: 1. Where were you in your heart and mind before reading the material? 2. How do you journey with God and Debbie Irving as it relates to you personally, and lastly 3? Where are you in your heart and mind after reading the material?

When the group members have all had an opportunity to share thoughts on Irving's book, everyone agreed to read, *Too Heavy a Yoke*. This book is about a Black Woman's burden of a false strength; "Black women are strong. At least that is what everyone says and how they are constantly depicted. But what, exactly, does this strength entail? And what price do Black women pay for it?"

Walker-Barnes writes about her childhood, her profession as a psychologist, and the dark side of being a child placed in an adult role to care for her younger brother while her mother, a single parent, worked. Walker-Barnes was raised by her mother single-handedly and provided for her two children. Unfortunately, the system failed this woman pathetically. The researcher can surmise that Walker-Barnes' mother could not afford childcare. She worked in a job that underpaid her. Bass Mezirow's *Transformative Learning in Practice* offered some practical advice on moving forward with this subject of *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women*.⁶ After this course of study, the researcher believes Walker-Barnes' childhood is a perfect example of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. This young girl was saddled with raising her younger brother and never knew what it meant to be a little girl. In her book, *Too Heavy a Yoke*, she discussed the burden placed on her shoulders may have been the reasons for her depression during childhood to her adult life.

It was not easy to see through Walker-Barnes's hardships as a child and read that she was forced into a situation that would leave her scarred and wounded for a lifetime. This woman always had to question everyone's intentions and motives. This PTSD (Post

⁶ Jack Mezirow and Edward W. Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community Workplace and Higher Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2009), www.josseybass.com.

Traumatic Stress Disorder) caused her to second guess people, especially men, for the lack of affection and her mother's love for her father.

Walker-Barnes grew up feeling that it was her job to be the caretaker of her entire family even after she married and had a home and husband to care for. This successful psychologist studied the signs of depression and used them to heal herself and other women suffering from the same disorder of depression and the lack of self-confidence.

Society labels the Black single female parent as “the strong black woman” as though that tag is complimentary. Consequently, being a (super-she-ro) Black single parent is nothing to brag about. The labeling means this “she-ro” must overcompensate for her children by working overtime or two jobs while wearing a mask to cover her pain and stress. Mezirow, in his book, defines the psychology of Transformative learning; “as learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change.”⁷

This clarifies Walker-Barnes’ position. Many single Black women parents worked not because it was stylish but out of necessity. No Black single parent was given a choice to choose between being a “stay at home” Mom. No single parents, particularly women of color, went to work out of necessity.

The researcher sought to understand how a culture of people demonized for a time, well beyond my years, lasted for a very long time. The researcher’s search was directed to the King James Version of the African American Bible edited by the Reverend Dr. Cain Hope Felder, Professor of New Testament Languages and Literature

⁷ Jack Mezirow and Edward W. Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community Workplace and Higher Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), www.josseybass.com.

of Howard University. Professor Felder pulled together a repertoire of scholars to undertake and dismantle a culture's master deception in this exceptional version of the bible.

As the researcher read this volume of material, answers to the researcher's query were found. There is so much pain wrapped in the Black man's story, yet Salvation came despite what the White man did in perpetrating evil. God rose up a woman named Harriet Tubman, a Black Moses, who put the devil on waivers. "What the devil thought for evil, the LORD used it for good (Genesis 50:20 RSV)." These resilient people forged a history that showed they could "make brick without straw (Exodus 5:7);" for them, Christ was seen through the hearing of the passage, "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Corinthians 5:1)."

Change is hope-Hope is eternal:

The researcher's new position at St. John's came like the smell of fresh-baked cookies. The researcher felt the love of a congregation of "plain good folk!" Unfortunately, the past pastor once said, "The reluctance of congregations to change worship styles and a narrow understanding of fellowship has left many of us stuck."⁸

Change is also found in the breaking of bread:

There is a mystery in going to the Communion Table. The faithful Christian's understanding of Communion is that Jesus Christ breaks the bread and drinks the wine.

⁸ Richard Guhl, interview by author, Monroeville, November 5, 2019.

Congregants enter and take part in a refreshing time of renewal. The table at St. John's is open. St. John's is available to those who know that Jesus Christ is Lord and life everlasting "is in him." The congregants come to the table looking to be transformed and changed. Once, the researcher heard a brother say, "I wish we had Communion every Sunday!" The researcher agreed that having Communion is sitting at the table with the LORD Jesus Christ, what a day of fellowship to sit and commune with him weekly. God's Church is one where all his children worship together in Spirit and in truth on one accord (John 4:24).

As a pastor, the researcher believes St. John's to be a healthy congregation of "down to earth" people in these four-plus years. So, it is no surprise that the researcher has had a good relationship with the good people of St. John's because they opened their hearts to new ideas to enhance the ministry.

It seemed that they were being protective, like a mother hen over her chicks. As the years flew by, some of those ideas have turned into annual events; the things "We never did before" are now listed on the calendar as part of the Church's events. Change is resistant for selfish reasons as well as frivolous reasons. The people now know the researcher to be somewhat dogmatic. Nevertheless, the researcher keeps challenging the people, hoping they find goodwill in it.

The researcher's family supports the researcher wholeheartedly and brings their children and grandchildren out to many of the Church's functions. The researcher's family has come to the table as members of the same family and is one in Christ Jesus.

Context- Community Changes History of Larimer, Pennsylvania

Reverend R. G. served at St. John's from 1975 to June 30, 1988. The researcher is grateful for Reverend R. G.'s help as the researcher called on Reverend R. G. for some data for this project. Reverend G. spoke of when St. John's Church had an entire congregation of approximately 210 members. Today, about 110 members with no more than 40 members attend on any given Sunday.

During Reverend R. G.'s pastorate, there was a decline in the membership, and Reverend R. G. believed it was the result of the loss of industry; the United States Steel Mills and Westinghouse Airbrake. Today, the researcher sees members returning, and that can only be justified by the researcher's home visits and spreading the Word that St. John's is not a discriminating fellowship. It was learned in funerals when many families came together; many members were married Catholics. It seemed that North Huntingdon held some strong biases around marrying other faiths, which carried a strong feeling of separatism. The researcher feels that we are all one in Christ Jesus, where one's family is, so goes your heart.

The researcher learned from doing some intense research that the present name Larimer, Pennsylvania, was once called Larimer Station because of the train that ran through the small town. Larimer is situated in the foothills of Irwin, Pennsylvania. The town of Larimer was named after the son of Robert Larimer. William Larimer, born in 1771 in Mt. Joy, in Adams County, Pennsylvania, was where he spent his first twenty years.

In 1790, William moved to Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, and purchased a farm on the King's Highway known as the Mansion Farm. It was in North Huntingdon Township, now the site of the town of Circleville. There, William and Anne, his wife, lived for fifty years and entertained many prominent men, including William Henry Harrison and Aaron Burr.⁹

William died on the Mansion Farm, September 18, 1838. His wife Anne died on August 23, 1853. Their children were Margaret, George, William (General Larimer, co-founder of Denver, Colorado), Martha Washington, Hamilton, James, Anne, Thomas, and Mary.

History of the St. John's United Church of Christ, Larimer, Pennsylvania Change in Ministry

St. John's United Church of Christ is in the small rural town of Larimer, Pennsylvania, who received its charter on March 22, 1885, with seventy-five charter members and is approximately 134 years old. There is an overwhelming number of female clergies, outnumbering the male clergy. WAMA gathers monthly in small group to pray, to discuss the conference business and address each pastor's sorrow and thanksgiving. The latest discussions have been on the social ills affecting the world and its churches in and around the subject of racism and discrimination as it relates to the Church. Our General Synod, which governs the whole UCC Church, has written a document entitled, Race, Power, and Policy: Dismantling Structural Racism.

The United Church of Christ is a mainline Protestant Christian denomination based in the United States, with historical confessional roots in the Congregational,

⁹ Pennsylvania Founding Families, 1681-1911 (online Ancestry.com).

Reformed and Lutheran traditions, with approximately 4,882 churches and 824,866 members. The United Church of Christ is a historical continuation of the General Council of Congregational Christian churches. It was founded under the influence of New England Pilgrims and Puritans. Moreover, it also subsumed the third-largest Reformed Group in the country, the German Reformed.

The Evangelical and Reformed Church and the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches united in 1957 to form the UCC. These two denominations, which resulted from earlier unions, had their roots in Congregational, Lutheran, Evangelical, and Reformed denominations. At the end of 2014, the UCC's 5,116 congregations claimed 979,239 members, primarily in the U.S. In 2015, Pew Research estimated that 0.4 percent, or one million adult adherents, of the U.S. population, self-identify with the United Church of Christ.¹⁰

Upon the researcher's new appointment, trying to live out its covenantal agreement, the St. John's Consistory joined the researcher in inviting for the first time two African American choirs whose members hail from a mixture of ethnicities; Caucasian, African American, and Jewish cultures. In addition, the choir represents men and women from thirty-five to ninety-three years old.

No matter the denominational differences and ages, the researcher learned that these saints are one in faith and share in the love of the Lord, Jesus Christ. St. John's has had the pleasure of hearing these people sing unto the Lord for the fifth year. God is doing a mighty work as he uses these people to bring harmony and transformation in this conservative and typically blessing all those who came out to hear them.

¹⁰ United Church of Christ Pew Research, <https://www.pewforum.org.united-church-of-Christ>.

In honor of Dr. King and Black History month, this time together was an accurate display of God's love abounding. The writer can say that this event has indeed proven to be a "Bridge over troubled Waters" and an "ice breaker" as it has brought together in peace and harmony; Black and White people not only from Pittsburgh but all of Westmoreland County. As the researcher looked out over the guests, the researcher remembered the day of ordination and how the District Minister remarked, "This is like the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:2, RSV)!" St. John's together saw what God wants to see in His Church; a church of all His children; African Americans, Euromericans, a beautiful tapestry of His love.

At these concerts, the researcher has noticed that beauty is the "real" audience; members are not just members of St. John's, but guests; who responded to Word of mouth and personal invitations. Unfortunately, the attendance at this event seems to have dropped, yet what has been remarkable is that many attendees make it known to the writer that they enjoyed the event, and St. John's can look forward to seeing them next year.

St. John's members and the wrier have grown in so many ways, and the researcher wants them to find it in their hearts to see and feel the compassion for doing good ministry. For the good Church is not hidden behind wooden doors or a dozen cookies packaged in plastic and sold to the community of Larimer. Still, the good ministry considers the wider community, the people that surround Westmoreland County.

St. John's Larimer Train Station is surrounded by a cross-section of settlers who came to the town as immigrants from Germany. The St. John's neighborhood is settled. Many people from this hard-working town matriculated to the South after their sole

source of income, the coal mines, closed. The city was fraught with one disappointment after another. It was not easy for families to survive without the coal mine and the steel mill. There came the Second World War and the loss of men to the Vietnam War. All the closings devastated the small town forcing many to leave and find work.

Larimer could easily be considered a town that was “Steadfast and unmovable!” A steadfast person knows what he believes and will not be “tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching (Ephesians 4:14, RSV).” What has been learned over all the researcher’s tenure is having interviewed so many, is that the people of Larimer are resilient. The community may have been dealt a heavy blow, but their faith was intact. The researcher is concerned about how many families have not been served in this small community merely 500 feet away. It is thought that the difference in reaching a new audience for Christ may only be 500 feet away. As this year unfolds, the researcher plans to do a little research on the trailer community to learn what St. John’s might do to win them over for Christ Jesus.

What is particularly dear for me is that in this community, the UCC families found a way to bridge a relationship with their children’s Catholic in-laws looking beyond a religion, thereby keeping the relationship with each Church harmonious. There is love in this UCC church and community of faith. Many people, who come as guests, have returned to say, “I love this church; I plan on coming back.”

God is doing a new thing at St. John’s, and what he is doing has made the researcher’s faith more robust, and that color and ethnicity are not how one should see the Church of God. God’s Church is multi-cultural and without discrimination. What a joy to know those words are true. To worship at St. John’s is humbling. If you let them, St.

John's UCC will win you over for Christ, for His Word said, "Let your light so shine before men that others will see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16, RSV)." In the past five years, the researcher has buried over twelve people. Some were lifelong members who once served the Church while at the height of their careers and health. Now, infirmed or living in a nursing facility supports their Church in prayer, money, and thanksgiving. The researcher's heart yearns to know more about the neighbors and is blessed to introduce them to St. John's fellowship and provide spiritual sustenance to their lives. St. John's United Church of Christ remains steadfast and immovable, always abiding in the LORD for more than one hundred thirty-four years.

My Ministry Journey

The researcher entered United Theological Seminary's Doctoral program after withdrawing from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. The reason for the withdrawal was to finally use the researcher's "gifts" and the "high" prophetic calling spoken over the researcher's life since three years old. God's people need direction in spiritual guidance. They need to be nurtured and given a "balanced" diet of meat, potatoes, and vegetables. The Apostle Paul once said, "I feed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food, even now you are still not ready. For you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving according to human inclination (1Corinthians 3:1-3, RSV)?"

Here in the northeast, where many mainline churches are in decline, the preachers need to do something inspiring to draw "all men unto myself (John 12:32 NIV)." Many

have lost the zeal to prophesy and give the people “What thus saith the LORD.” It is in Ezekiel 34 that God spoke:

Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock, verse 2? You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured, verse 4. Therefore, the LORD declared if we fail to give the sheep what they need, he himself will move us out of the way and do it himself.

The service at St. John’s inspired the researcher to return to the seminary for which is believed to have consummated what God planted in the researcher as a child; to go beyond the ordinary and do the extraordinary. The researcher cannot do anything without first enlisting the help of God and the affirmation of His people. What the researcher needs is not another course of study or to expound on what the Church Fathers did at the inception of the Church. No, the researcher believes the Doctor of the Church is the degree of excellence. The Doctor of the Church should be the level of learning that takes the congregation from complacency to being set “on fire” for the Lord.

Martin Luther King, Jr., in his famous letter written from the Birmingham jail fifty-plus years ago, attempted to answer the questions raised by four Euro-American colleagues who felt his timing was wrong for staging a march.¹¹ These clergymen felt King was placing their lives in jeopardy. King answered them in a very poignant letter pointing out their lack of zeal for God’s people and His Church. People commemorate his life, recognizing that his cause to eradicate discrimination and racism against the Negro is still but a Dream. King suffered and died for what he believed, but the dream lives on.

¹¹ James M. Washington, *A Testament of Hope, The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King Jr.* (New York: HarperCollins, 1986), 214.

The researcher is a product of King's dream and has so much to be proud of in this season of life; Geneva College in the writer's fifties, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in the sixties, and now United Theological in the researcher's seventies; what more could be asked for now? The struggle that King died for was not in vain. The researcher is proud to say that the past has caught up with the present, and the researcher is fully awake. The researcher loves this place and time in life. Yet, if the truth be told (the demons are dead), the researcher's joy would be complete to serve the Church of my humble beginnings and the Church where it all began.

As a preacher, a lot is placed on the importance of teaching a text. The Apostle Paul stressed how you could preach without your hearers understanding the Word. If your hearers do not know what you are preaching, how can they apply it to their own lives? The researcher knows that was the researcher's folly and has learned a lesson from Reverend H., the researcher's mentor. Your hearers lack so much when they do not understand what is being preached. In other words, we do our congregations a disservice if they do not understand the Bible, which is designed for the edification of the soul.

The researcher has been accused of being a Fundamentalist. That is accepted, for the researcher has been taught to believe in the inerrant Word of God. Now, does the researcher recognize context and culture? Yes, the researcher does recognize context and culture. The researcher teaches from experience and uses a text from the Bible to explain an experience that mirrors the text.

Getting back to being fired, Exxon taught the researcher two life lessons: the devil is not only a liar, but the devil is alive and at work twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, twelve months of the year. The researcher's second lesson is that we do not have to

be defeated. God showed the researcher that in the book of Job. God revealed that no devil in hell has the power to kill you without His permission. The researcher did not always know this. It took revisiting the researcher's past. It took a lot of time kneeling on the knees and then on the face to remind me that God "gifted" the writer in a way that no man can do. The researcher had to learn not to become the victim but be the victor!

When the researcher finally surrendered and called on the LORD, the baggage of an unhappy marriage and the responsibility of raising two teenage boys alone did not disappear; it was then that the researcher felt someone else was there helping to carry the load. The researcher saw God opening doors that had been shut in my face. The researcher saw people in the ministry react more respectfully. It seemed that the very people who had been the researcher's enemies were now working to move obstacles out of the way that had been blocked before. The researcher is aware of the challenges that women face entering what has been an all-male world. African American women, women of all ethnicities; especially, those over fifty, are not the "cream of the crop." The mainline churches do not want to take the risk of calling women; particularly, those over fifty. Yet, the researcher knows that is just business.

The Sunday that changed my Life

On Sunday, over twenty years ago, the researcher remembers walking up to Pastor, Reverend C. H., who retired in 2003, and questioned him on the passage that he preached that morning, Jesus attending the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11). The researcher was so bold and accused him of using the wrong text. Not only was that a bold move, but thank God, Reverend H. saw "Beyond my faults and saw my needs."

The researcher can still hear him saying, “Judith dear, Jesus preached at more than one banquet, go back to your Bible and check it out; let me know what you find.” When going back to the Bible and searching all of the four gospels, the researcher realized just how impetuous and rude that was by first approaching the pastor with such an accusation. Still, the researcher realized how little she knew of the Bible. It was then that the researcher knew God was speaking to her through Reverend H. After a long time in prayer and discernment, the researcher went to Reverend H. and asked for his wisdom and guidance in moving from being weak in the understanding of the Bible to being strong in the knowledge of who the Lord is in my life. Reverend H. became my mentor and honored my passion for serving.

The Discernment Process

During the discernment process, the researcher took on an Isaiah posture, “Here I am Lord, use me (Isaiah 6:8),” yet, the researcher could see a little of Jeremiah’s call: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you before you were born I set you apart (Jeremiah 1:5),” and then, there was something in what Amos said that also touched me; “I was neither a prophet nor a prophet’s son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees, but the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, go prophecy to my people Israel (Amos 7:14, RSV).”

Then in February 2003, Reverend H. invited me to preach my first sermon, and afterward, he came forward to make acknowledgments. Reverend H. blessed me by saying, “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream

dreams, even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy (Acts 2:17-18, NIV).

Psalm 23: The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want

Reverend H. stood beside the researcher in my journey to the pulpit. He recognized that the researcher has a “gift.” The two would talk long hours about what direction should be taken and at the same time wondered what it would be like to serve as a pastor in the United Methodist Church. Reverend H. discouraged the researcher by saying, “Judith, how old are you? To become a pastor in the United Methodist Church, do you know that you must first have a bachelor’s degree?” “Then what?” the researcher asked. Reverend H. went on to say that you can have a bachelor’s degree in Ronald McDonald College cooking. Still, no one will be accepted in the United Methodist Church without a Master’s in Divinity.

When Reverend H. made that statement, the researcher’s heart sank and was not disappointed in the process, but was disappointed in Reverend H. not believing that the researcher had what the United Methodist required to become an elder in the United Methodist Church. The researcher became incensed with the desire to return to school, earn a bachelor’s degree, and then the hallowed Masters of Divinity (MDiv). The United Methodist Church follows an itinerant ministry process whereby the Bishop makes appointments every year at the Annual Conference. All pastors either remain in the church they already serve or are reassigned.

Reverend H. had served Warren for about twelve years, held an MDiv, and was nearing retirement. Warren requested that Reverend H. be removed due to their financial

inability to pay an elder with thirty or more years of service. The Bishop reassigned Reverend H. to another church in the Sheraden area of Pittsburgh. Reverend H. invited the researcher to follow him with the assurance that he could provide the ecumenical training that the researcher needed to further the ministry career in the United Methodist Church. While at Sheraden, Reverend H. extended an invitation to become his Associate and get the experience of preaching at least two Sunday's a month. After being at Sheraden for about a year, Reverend H. encouraged the researcher to write to the District Superintendent and ask for her blessings to move the researcher along the chain towards becoming a Licensed Local Pastor; the District Superintendent passed over the researcher. Reverend H. and the researcher were devastated, but knowing that God was there during this entire process, another opportunity opened, and the researcher took it.

God moves in mysterious ways. Reverend H., after retirement, felt that the researcher needed a breakthrough to see God's Divine Plan for life outside of one's comprehension upon his recommendation. So, out of God's Divine Plan, an invitation was sent to meet with the Westmoreland District Superintendent. The researcher was appointed to serve a church much as the Church Paul planted at Corinth out of that meeting.

Called According to His Purpose:

"All things do work together for the good (Romans 8:28, NIV)." In 2010, after serving as the first African American female to pastor a Hungarian Church, First Hungarian Reformed Church of the Calvin Synod, for two years, the researcher was offered an opportunity to meet the Conference Minister of the Pennsylvania West

Conference. It was the most humble and affirming time of my ministry. This move of God was made by order of the Reverend Albert Kovac, my mentor and dearly beloved pastor/friend. Reverend Albert Kovac promised to write in a church before his death. Under the grace and direction of the Conference Minister, the researcher was given the Privilege of Call, and the rest made Christendom history. Accepting an invitation to preach at a Hungarian Reformed Church in Homestead, Pennsylvania, the researcher was invited to become the part-time pastor by the Consistory of the Church and the Annual Pennsylvania West Conference of the Calvin Synod.

The researcher's license to preach by the First Hungarian Reformed Church was recognized and thus, became the First Hungarian Reformed Church pastor in 2011. My service was full of new and precious experiences. History was made. This was the only African American male or female to ever serve in the Calvin Synod of a Hungarian Reformed Church. This move of God was made by order of the Reverend Albert Kovac, my mentor and dearly beloved friend. Reverend Albert Kovac promised to place the researcher in a church before his death. Under the grace and direction of the Conference Minister, Rev. David Ackerman, the researcher was given the Privilege of Call to serve at the St. John's United Church of Christ.

The congregation of St. John's (approximately eighty members) is faithfully following God's command as seen by their industrious, energetic, and inviting manner. Over the past four- and one-half years, there has been growth in grace and inclusion. The congregation sold an enormous number of cookies at Christmas. In 2015, the women of St. John's sold a tremendous amount of baked goods throughout the year. At Christmas, we sold over 800 dozen assorted cookies. What the researcher would like to see with the

number of volunteers is that they shift some of the energy to include those in the St. John's community; "the least of these (Matthew 25-31, RSV)."

The researcher's dream is to look beyond the faults and failures of past ministries and embrace change. There are so many endeavors that St. John's can do to bring the "least of these" to wholeness and faith. The Church is mandated to love our neighbors as ourselves.

As the researcher works toward a thesis to bring understanding to the Church on racism and "Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women," the researcher is praying for God to intervene and guide the thesis' path. The researcher hopes for the final dissertation to open the hearts and minds of the congregation we serve in WAMA to take this work into their churches for transformation, understanding, and healing.

The Christian knows that racism and "Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women" is a moral obligation whose time has come to an end. The researcher is reminded that discrimination and racism are immoral with this project. Preachers are "called." Preachers do not have the luxury to ignore the cry for equality. With this project, "Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women," the researcher's work is to dismantle racism and bring racial harmony in the context of our churches, a blessing unto God. To God be the glory.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The twenty-first-century Protestant church, with its religious dogma and cultural biases, is being studied against the Hebrew church of the first century to gain an understanding of why it is in decline. The single pericope is the Gospel of Mark 5:25-34 as it relates to a woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years without a cure for her disease.

This text is set in a very hostile climate when the Jews were under the oppressive rule of Emperor Nero. The author, possibly John Mark, sought to show Jesus Christ in the context of the Messiah, the Son of God. In this role, Mark savors a savior who deliberately defies cultural biases and social constructs that destroy harmony and understanding among His people.

There is trouble in this text. This second Gospel of Mark is full of tension. The Markan text baffled the Bible historians for its simplicity and directness. “Why does Mark have such brief didactic portions if the Logia-collections were a collection of discourses such as are now, preserved in the Gospel of Matthew? Or, if the older source contained narratives also, how can we account for the verbal variations and agreements in the three Gospels? The remarks of Meyer on this subject assume the correctness of his theory respecting the relation of the Synoptic Gospels to each other and their dependence.

However, in different ways, upon the Logia-collection of Matthew, he thinks consisted simply of discourses and it is the work referred to by Papias.”¹

Mark is not a “flowery” periscope. It does not start with a beautiful salutation or autobiography of the author. No, Mark’s pericope is short and to the point. Yet, throughout this gospel, Mark packages a faith story, layer by layer, as he “sandwiched” three miraculous stories of healings.

N.T. Wright remarked in *Mark for Everyone*, “What Mark has done is to place one tale inside the other, in what is sometimes called a Markan sandwich. The flavor of the outer story adds zest to the inner one; the taste of the inner one is meant in turn to permeate the outer one.”²

Though short and direct, Mark's pericope is full of compassion for those who suffer “silently.” Although Mark is short, simplistic, and less flowery, it is direct, to the point, and timeless. Mark portrays Jesus as a “no-nonsense” healer, one who acts on those who need him “immediately” (Mark 5:2, 5:29-30, 5:420).

The text, written two-millenniums ago, might have been written last month. Religious leaders are as divided now on how to best present Jesus as they were in the First Century. Mark proposes that Jesus did not have to prove Himself by performing miracles. The believer’s faith did that for him.

¹ Note by American Editor, *The Gospel of Mark, Origin of the Gospel* (Washington, DC: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), 1.

² Tom Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, SPCK, 2001, ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=868565>, Created from dtl on 2020-04-09 15:20:35.

Within this pericope is a remarkable testimony of faith. Over the years, commentators discussed Mark's Gospel as written by Peter or even Paul. The authority was just one problem. The late German theologian, Rudolf Bultmann, theorized that the writers of the New Testament Gospels did not have to use miracles to prove that Jesus Christ is LORD. Rudolf Bultmann used "demythologization," or the removal of miracles.

Removing miracles, Rudolf Bultmann believed, would encourage the post-modernist to believe in Jesus. Rudolf Bultmann was convinced that Jesus Christ employed mysticism to draw men to him. In his 1677 Political Treatise, Bultmann remarked, "That any Scripture which is inconsistent with natural laws must be interpreted either as unreliable testimony or as a metaphorical or allegorical representation of a moral teaching."³

The climax of this powerful, short, and poignant story has traveled down through the years. Many continue to misconstrue its purpose and have taken it out of context. "After some days, Paul said to Barnabas, come let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing. Barnabas wanted to take with them; John called Mark. But Paul decided not to visit them, who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in work. The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus."⁴

³Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ, and Mythology* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1958), 36.

⁴Acts 15:36-40, The New Revised Standard Version, will be used for all Bible References unless otherwise noted.

Despite this incident, the pericope is a tremendous “testimony” of faith and the power in Jesus’ authority. The text exudes hope and faith in one whose powers go beyond miracles to offering His life up that all humanity would have the blessing of eternal life.

This pericope of Mark, though dated, even expands to the “Special Needs Community.” Author Jaime Clark-Soles, a Perkins School of Theology professor, teaches *Evil, Suffering, and Death in the New Testament*. Her goal is for us to stop saying stupid stuff about evil, suffering, and death. Part of that goal entails thinking more deeply about the Bible and disability issues. While healing is always a worthy goal of Christian practice to be celebrated whenever and wherever it occurs, the cure stories are not necessarily unmitigated good news for those faithful people who live with various chronic disabilities.

In her presentation, Clark-Soles points out, “Disability studies are a relatively new discipline in the humanities and even newer in biblical studies. In disability studies, it is customary to distinguish between impairment and disability (a social phenomenon).”⁵

The New Testament, mainly this text, bares good news, provides an answer to discomfort, and points the way to Jesus as the comforter who promises, “To never leave you nor forsake you, (Romans 12:5, RSV)” notice how Jesus handled the unnamed woman’s circumstance: “Your faith has made you well (Mark 5:34).”

Mark’s Gospel is the foundation for my thesis. Mark 5:25-34 is layered with the tension of that day a time, both frustrating and fascinating, that caught the attention of Justin Martyr (c. 100-165). “Justin, Greek-born in Flavia Neapolis near ancient Shechem

⁵ Jaime Clark Soles, Article, *Mark, and Disability*, *ATLA*, 2016, <http://int.sagepub.com/> (Subscriber access).

and trained as a teacher of Platonic philosophy, in his apology, contended against charges of irrationalism, immorality, political subversion, and atheism.”⁶

Turning to the story of Jairus, the religious leader, Justin, would have easily understood the climate of that day as he juxtaposed the position of the religious leader who summoned Jesus to go with him to heal his ailing daughter. Just as Jesus turned to go, knowing that he had been touched, he responded to someone else’s needs. The disciples had no clue of what happened. Jesus then questioned, “Who touched me?” (Mark 5:31). This verse does not imply that Jesus ignored Jairus’ needs; it just says, Jesus will still find time to address your needs, too, just “wait on Him” (Psalm 46). Although Jairus’ twelve-year-old daughter was dead before Jesus arrived at her home, Jesus brought her back, for He said, “The child is not dead but sleeping (Mark 5:39).”

Here lies one of the most poignant characteristics of Jesus; it has already been said that He is a holy man, but now after performing these miracles, He is seen as a healer. Jesus, in just this one chapter, has gained the attention of seekers as well as believers. Here in this text, the believer is offered a glimpse of the LORD, God’s sovereignty. The Messiah not only holds the keys to life and death but also eternity.

“Mark’s purpose was accordingly not historical or biographical, but intensely practical. He was writing a book for the guidance and support of his fellow

⁶ “Ministry Matters,” <https://www-ministrymatters-com.utsdayton.idm.oclc.org/privacy.html>.

Christians in a situation of intense crisis.”⁷ Mark offers hope to “who-so-ever will believe!” Jairus was a Jew, not yet a believer, yet here, he was inclined to believe that his daughter might be healed on the pretense.

The demoniac knew Jesus. The devil knows Jesus. The demoniac had been tormented for so long. He begged Jesus not to harm him. Jairus risked being dishonored by the religious community to form a relationship with Jesus. The relationship Jairus sought with Jesus is the same relationship dynamic Jesus sought from his disciples, “Who do you say that I am (Matthew 16:19)?”

This query pops up in an essay by Andrew M. Mbuvi, “Emerging Discipline.” Mbuvi’s work “ardently embraces the challenge to make the Bible relevant to African concerns, questions, and interests. The result is a growing body of works that are being used to articulate, engage and critique the Bible in juxtaposition with African religious, political, economic, cultural, and social realities”⁸ as seen in how the father in Jairus dropped all constraints that might block his beloved daughter from receiving God’s grace. Jairus found that in Jesus is health over sickness and life over death, “The way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).”

“African Biblical Studies as it has come into its own ardently embraces the challenge to make the Bible relevant to African concerns. This approach does not simply take the questions, methods, presuppositions, and interpretations that arrived in the west and are uncritically appropriate for them in African Biblical settings. For this reason,

⁷ Mary Ann Tolbert, *Mark*, The Interpreter’s Bible, Vol. 11 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1951), 123.

⁸ M. Mbuvi, Essay, *African Biblical Studies, An Introduction to an Emerging Discipline*, Currents in Biblical Research, Vol. 15, no. 2 (2017): 149-178.

ABS engages the Bible free (or as free as possible) of any trappings of western hermeneutical presuppositions and interest. (Omenyo and Arthur, 2013).”⁹ Using this approach, Nigerian Justin Ukpong was characterized as the lynchpin of African Biblical Interpretation as an encounter between the Biblical texts. The African context is not hesitant to address the past, present, and future in light of the biblical texts (Dube and West 2000), first believers were said to be Africans.

Mark’s Gospel was contested by Biblical scholars, that is, Tacitus, Annals 15, 44. In the Patristic Commentary:

Now those four evangelists whose names have gained the most remarkable circulation over the whole world and those numbers had been fixed as four; may be for the simple reason that there are four divisions; that the world through the universal length of which they by their number as by a kind of mystical sign, indicated the advancing extension of the Church of Christ, are believed to have been written in the order which follows: first Matthew, then Mark, thirdly Luke, lastly John.¹⁰

This gospel did something so profound that millions glean from it today. Though Jesus explicitly said he came to heal the weak and the poor, clearly, He never excluded the “status quo!” Notice Jesus showed grace to Jairus, the leader of the synagogue.

At the very opening of this pericope, Jesus healed the demoniac. This man was so grateful. Even though the demoniac asked to follow Him, Jesus said, “Go show yourself to your friends and tell them how much the LORD has done for you (Mark 5:19).” In

⁹ Andrew M. Mbuvi, Essay, *African Biblical Studies: An Introduction to an Emerging Discipline*, Currents in Biblical Research Vol. 15, no. 2 (2017): 149-178.

¹⁰ Mark Gospel Harmony, Patristic Bible Commentary, <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/mark-gospel-harmony>.

other words, this good news is meant for everyone, and all who know Him are to testify of his unmerited grace.

This pericope of Mark never received the acclaim that the books of Matthew, Luke, and John received (synoptic gospels). In lectionary readings, seldom is Mark found being cited. Although this pericope of an unknown woman's healing may not make the evening news, her story is a hallmark for women who are overlooked, denied access to positions of authority, and discriminated against by the powers that be who sit behind desks of importance. These gatekeepers are in the Halls of Justice, courtrooms, classrooms, and even healthcare institutions' board rooms. Maya Angelou wrote, "*Still We Rise*."¹¹ Within the book itself, there is no claim of authorship. The traditional title, according to Mark, was added to manuscripts during the second century C.E. or later. After the Canon of the four Gospels emerged, it became necessary to differentiate them (Hengel 1985, 64-84).

Social and Historical Content

Ministry Matters, "What we cannot...Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote whatever he remembered, but not in order, of the things said and done by the LORD. For he had neither heard the LORD, nor had he followed him, but later, (followed) Peter, who used to offer the teachings in anecdotal form but not making, as it were, a systematic arrangement of the LORD's oracles."¹²

¹¹ Maya Angelou, "*Still I Rise*," <https://poets.org/poem/still-i-rise>.

¹² *What we cannot know*, Ministry Matters, <https://www.com.utsdayton.idm.ocic.org/reader/9781426750199#chapter11.xhtmllex10>.

From as early as the second century C.E., the Christian tradition ascribes the Second Gospel to “Mark” to be distributed to a simplistic audience of primarily nonliterate people. The great theologian Augustine seems not to have known this tradition, for he argued that the Gospel of Mark was merely an abbreviation of the Gospel of Matthew. Jerome, the translator of the Bible into Latin, believed that the author of Mark was John Mark of Acts 15:37-38, an associate of Paul’s.¹³

“Mark began this story with a citation from Scripture, making a connection to the Book of Isaiah to describe John’s activity. This scriptural text establishes the authority of John’s appearance. Although the prophecy of Isaiah is listed as the source of this citation, verses 2-3 are a conflation of two or three texts, Exodus 23:20, Malachi 3:1, and Isaiah 40:3.”¹⁴

This Markan pericope beginning in chapter five, with the healing of the Gerasene Demoniac comes immediately after Jesus, and the disciples have dealt with a sudden storm. In Mark’s graphic words 4:37, “The waves beat into the boat so that the boat was already filling and Jesus awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, peace be still, and a great calm followed. Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?”¹⁵

Herod is in power, taxes continue to soar, and people are hungry, thirsty, and in poor health. Sick people have heard about Jesus of Nazareth. Good news travels fast, and those living great distances away clamor to see and hear him. So many others, hearing of

¹³ Mary Ann Tolbert, “Mark,” *The New Interpreter’s Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 1803.

¹⁴ Emerson B. Powery, *Mark Immersion Bible Studies* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2011), 10.

¹⁵ Mary Ann Tolbert, “Mark,” *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 1816.

his healing power, loaded up, put their sick on anything they could find, and walked to where he was said to be.

Layers of Literary Context:

Lamentations -pain and suffering-disease and death

Mark 5:1-20 opens with its subject, The Gerasene. This passage is familiar in Luke 8:26-39. “They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. When he had stepped out of the boat, immediately, a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain; for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him.” The first layer of this literary context points to water or the sea. This event is taking place where Jesus will bring cleansing out of an “unclean” situation. Jacob Neusner, “The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism,” examines the significance of purity in the study of religions by Mary Douglas. “Purity and Danger, Douglas wrote, states that purity was not a cultic metaphor alone. It was a term for a basic, probably unanalyzable, religious experience. She further expounded on two important ideas about purity and impurity that came down from ancient Israel: first, purity and impurity are cultic matters: second, they may serve as metaphors for moral and religious behavior

primarily regarding matters of sex, idolatry, and unethical action. Purity furthermore closely relates to holiness. The land is holy. Therefore it must be kept clean.”¹⁶

The second layer is the disease marking the man as dead in the sight of the people and dead as he is seen living among the dead in a cemetery. The third layer speaks of the power of Jesus in his looking beyond the social context and religious dogma to just seeing the immediate needs of a man to be “whole” again by his healing touch.

In the fourth layer, notice that the demoniac knows Jesus and his power to heal Him. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him; and he shouted at the top of his voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God (Mark 5:6)!”

The pericope shares with the reader something Jesus’ closest followers (disciples) were having trouble recognizing. Jesus continued to be perplexed that out of twelve, there was only one disciple who had some knowledge of his deity: Simon, Son of Bar-Jonah (Matthew 16:19).

The core of Jesus’ ministry was to present himself not as a miracle worker but as the one who was sent to save the world from sin. The three narratives of the “sandwich” end with Jesus doing the “unthinkable” for society to understand. Jesus curses the demons, frees the man of them, and makes this man whole again. The entire pericope is full of grace. Amid hostile times, Jesus still extended grace. The story does not end as it began, hopeless.

¹⁶ Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1977), 9.

The socio-economic structure of this ancient story did not dissuade Jesus. Jesus would not be mocked. If one came to him in need, he addressed their needs, whether of his religious sect or not. If they appealed for help (even on the Sabbath), Jesus did not deny them. “I come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly (John 10:10).”

Not knowing the circumstances of Jairus and his dying daughter, a woman in need interrupts Jesus by reaching into the crowds. The woman goes unnoticed by the disciples and catches Jesus by surprise and touches His garment, saying, “If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well. Immediately, the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt that she was healed of the affliction in her body. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched My clothes (Mark 5:30)?”

There is a sense of lament seen in this passage. The parallelism of the first story of death by demon possession with an interruption of the sick woman to the last story of a little girl, twelve years old, draws the reader to see what Mark’s Gospel typifies, Jesus is more than a teacher, but as the writer of Hebrews attest; “Whom He has appointed heir of all things, the one through whom also He made the worlds (Hebrew 1:2).”

This momentary interruption made by the unnamed woman only took a few minutes, but in those few minutes, the child died. Sickness and disease affected all three subjects. Mark’s Gospel used three separate but equal miracles to emphasize that Jesus Christ is LORD over sickness and disease, life, and death.

Exegesis

Exegetical Outline

“A recurring theme throughout Mark’s Gospel bears on the inability of the disciples to understand Jesus.”¹⁷ For example: Here in Mark 5:21-43 are three powerful miracles; Mark Strauss, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, offers some very striking parallels between the two episodes:

1. Both females are in hopeless situations of chronic disease and impending death.
2. All three situations relate to ceremonial impurity, that is, the man’s demon state, the woman’s bleeding condition, and touching the little dead girl’s body.
3. Both are identified as “daughters” with a period of twelve years; for the woman, she’s been sick twelve years, and in the case of the child, she is twelve years old.
4. A holy man is not to be touched by those sick, and likewise Jesus-a Jew- was not to touch any of these figures by religious custom.

The woman goes against religious customs and touches Jesus’ garment-Jesus goes against customs and touches the dead body of the little girl. The Father (a religious leader) insists that Jesus go to his daughter-believing in him is healing. This Pharisee - recants-all that he has been taught by his Jewish culture and religion.

Jesus tells the demon, “Go home to your friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has compassion on you (Mark 5:19).” Likewise, “Jesus told the woman your faith has healed you.” Jesus encourages Jairus not to fear but to persevere in faith.¹⁸

“The history of recent research on the Gospel of Mark is the record of an attempt

¹⁷ Paul J. Achtemeier, *Mark as Interpreter of the Jesus Traditions*, (ATLAS), 346.

¹⁸ Mark Strauss, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, www.logos.com/product/54059/mark.

to discern the aim of the Evangelist and so discover the perspective which gives coherence to all the features of the Second Gospel.”¹⁹ The unknown woman in the Markan text offers hope to the believing world. There are layers upon layers of pain in this text. The three people involved: the demoniac, the unnamed woman, and the child are all, by Jewish law, ceremonially impure or unclean (Leviticus 15:19-31) and Ezekiel 36:17). Anyone who touched either of these people would result in being defiled and ostracized. If we separate the woman with the issue of blood, against all the religious dogma of that time, she would not be welcome. This pericope affirms the messianic authority and power of Jesus as King of kings and LORD of Lords.

Biblical Context

From the many Bible stories handed down over the centuries, we have this religious story with its strict rules of worship as part of understanding the rigorous culture of the Jewish Sect. The Jews are waiting for a Savior. The sick woman in the text saw Him in the flesh as she pushed past the disciples to touch Jesus, for “She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind saying, if I but touch his clothes, I will be made well (Mark 5:29).” The text confirms that she reached Jesus, “Touched” her, and immediately her bleeding stopped. In the Old Testament of Hebrew, Scripture offers the foundation for our passage in Mark 25-34: a woman is “unclean” (if she has a discharge) beyond the time of her (menstrual period) impurity (Leviticus 15:19-25, 31). The choice of using Mark as Jesus enters Capernaum helped to make a strong point of Jesus’ ministry to answer to the needs of all who call upon him.

¹⁹ Howard Clark Kee, *Mark’s Gospel in Recent Research*, Article, [http://int.sagepub.com/\(Subscriber\)](http://int.sagepub.com/(Subscriber)), ATLA, 2018.

This New Testament text then reaches back in time to examine the religious mores and doctrines which continue to burden the Christian Church today. This text in Mark is significant as we study the ways of a religious institution, its practices, and prejudices against women in leadership. It is here at the institutional level where the church has ignored the grace and fulfillment of God's good news.

The above passages from the Levitical codes and laws are held in tension to Jesus' message of religious freedom without condemnation, discrimination, or prejudice. Mark's testament of grace was so powerfully demonstrated in the "sandwich" in Mark 5:1, the healing of the Gerasene demon in Mark 5:1-20 to Jairus and Mark 5:21-25, to go with him because his daughter is near death.

The intent of using this pericope is to share the hope that is found in Jesus. There are four separate Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, yet, John Mark's Gospel, the shortest book, captures the essence of Jesus' deity. We see the sovereignty of God, a God who does what God does despite what anyone thinks, feels, or imagines. We have this powerful testimony of one woman's faith that risks all the cultural biases to take Jesus at His word.

Four questions helped to format this Biblical research paper. The number one question is: Who will benefit from this research? The number two question is: What will be gained from this study? The number three question is: Where will it take place? Lastly, when will it be implemented?

Who will benefit from this research project? The researcher will present this project to the governing body of the United Church of Christ in my area. The researcher's colleagues of the Westmoreland Association Ministerial Association have agreed to come

alongside the researcher on this doctoral journey. What period will this research cover?

The period to be studied is the inception of the United Church of Christ from 1956 through to the year 2020. Lastly, the subject for discussion is the Church Universal.

The church is suffering today from what appears to be a sense of “stagnation.”

There are those who believe the problem can be resolved by drawing in more members.

Ammerman in *Pillars of Faith* offered this opinion,

At the close of the twentieth century, the United States was, by all accounts, among the most religious of modern Western nations. In spite of high levels of education, technology, and mobility-long assumed to be harbingers of religious decline-almost all Americans said they believed in God, the vast majority identified with a particular religious tradition, well over half actually belonged to local congregation, and somewhere between 25 and 40 percent of the population (depending on which surveys you believe) showed up for services on any given weekend.²⁰

The Genre of the Text

This story in Mark is a narrative, yet it can also be a Lament of one of David’s Psalms used to soothe an aching heart from the pangs of this troubled world. David turned to the Psalms for praise and thanksgiving, laments, and sorrow and gave them to be sung and used in prayer. Believers see God’s handiwork in Psalms 24, 37, 38, and 40. Throughout the Gospels, God shows himself faithful, proclaiming the Good News and not the bad. Despite the wailing and the crying of her family and friends, Jesus took the hand of the little girl in Mark 5:41, “Talitha cum-(little girl, get up).” Throughout the Gospels are these miraculous stories, yet it is Mark’s Gospel that wants the readers to see not just the “immediacy” of Jesus, but that he is both God and Son.

²⁰ Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Pillars of Faith, American Congregations, and their Partners* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2002), 1.

Much like the symmetry of the poetic Psalms, Mark's New Testament Gospel applied the same parallelism tools, interweaving the three narratives of pain and suffering, sickness and disease, and fulfillment and hope found in Christ Jesus. God would have the disciples ignorant of this for the entire three and a half years of His ministry. It was not until after Jesus was crucified for His disciples to believe.

The prophets pointed to the one who will bore the sins of many and make intercession for the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12). He took the world's sins upon his shoulders and offered them restoration, peace, wholeness, and Salvation.

In each of the three narratives, Jesus is seen offering up Himself and forming an intimate relationship with those who were strangers. Jesus' healing touch was used throughout. Jesus allowed "touching," despite Jewish rules of engagement with the "unclean," creating a healthy relationship with those once seen as "untouchable."

This New Testament story follows Christologically and theologically ²¹ to those who need to know that the Lord Jesus is Christ and in him as God's only begotten Son is the "immediacy" made available and to each one through prayer. Mark's Gospel is powerful yet a short discourse on God's love. It follows the symmetry of David's Psalms of distress and despair. Psalms 40-44, 41, 42, and 44 are lamentations, yet, notice how the New Testament Gospels take the wailing and despair and turn it into the Good News found only in Christ Jesus.

The three stories are separate but all-inclusive of the very nature of Jesus. Jesus never flinched to the cultural mores of the time but provided healing and peace to all that

²¹ Susannah Ticciati, "Response to Walter Moberly's Theological Thinking and the Reading of Scripture," *ATLAS, Journal of Theological Interpretation* 10, no. 1, (2016): 117-123.

sought him. The times dictated that he lived by the religious law of Moses. Jesus proved, “He did not come to this earth for the purpose of acting as an adversary of the law. His goal was not to frustrate its fulfillment. Rather, he revered it, loved it, obeyed it, and brought it to fruition (Luke 24:44).”

The genre of this narrative points to another layer, Jewish Law. Jesus is a Jew who knew the Mosaic Laws better than anyone. The reference to the Levitical codes of being ruled “unclean” by touching the dead was yet “manmade,” therefore, Jesus does that which Jesus will do, heal the sick, raise the dead and allow those with “mustard seed faith” to believe (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Using the Theme of Unmerited Grace

In Matous Holeka’s paper on “Reading the Bible in Various Streams of Liberation Theology,” the author investigates the issue of the virus, HIV/AIDS, in the context of Mark’s healing stories, namely the bleeding woman and the daughter of Jairus and Jesus’ role in the middle of such circumstances. Holeka believes this narrative about the dead and ill is crucial for the people of South Africa to offer consolation and hope at this critical time of the pandemic.²²

This pericope of the woman in Mark 5 follows Holeka’s message of God’s provision of grace. The religious community held to the teaching of the Torah and the laws set forth by Moses.

²² Matous Holeka, “Reading the Bible in Various Streams of Liberation Theology, Latin American Theology, South African Black Theology, and Indian Dalit Theology,” (CV 2014/2): 169-196.

Jesus was once asked to explain why he went against the religious laws. “Jesus reminded those in doubt, and I do not come to change the law but to fulfill it. Preaching and teaching in the synagogue, I am the fulfillment of it. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God (Isaiah 61:1-2).”

Here in the Markan text is an unnamed woman exercising her faith. She took to the streets of Jerusalem, determined to go where she truly believed was a man with the power to heal her body. The text does not give much information about this woman. Readers are left to take these few lines and a measure of “mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32).” faith to believe with their hearts and minds that in Jesus is life, a life that is promised for eternity. Believers trust that this text is helping someone with their hearts and souls. Believers take from this story that in Jesus, everyone without regard for place and station is somebody special in Christ Jesus. This pericope seeks to erase doubt or fear, conquers time and ancient history to offer the reader the generous measure of hope where hopelessness resides.

This Markan text is the personification of unmerited grace. Unmerited grace is at the heart of Jesus’ ministry. Mark digs deep to portray Jesus’ unmerited grace. The unnamed demoniac, the unnamed woman, the unnamed child, all who endured in such harsh times, received Jesus’ unmerited grace. The text, Mark’s Gospel, does not waste words at the benefit of losing his hearers.

Using the theme of Immediacy

The words, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease (Mark 5:34)” exemplifies God’s love extended to a believer, a woman whose faith is justified by her actions. This text offers hope “immediately” as Jesus is seen healing this woman’s suffering not just physically but emotionally and mentally.

Mark’s pericope shows that there is another way to find relief and that relief is the assurance that comes with knowing *yada* יָדָע (Hebrew-to know) Christ Jesus. The literary construct of these four passages are linked to boat journeys (Mark 4:35-41), Jesus calming the storm at sea, Jesus arrives on the eastern shore of the lake, where he exorcises the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:1-20) returns to the western shore (Mark 5:21). All four of these episodes reveal the authority, power, and awe as Jesus fully exposes himself in the role of the Messiah (Mark 1:14-8:21). Mark simply says with the facts before us: the church failed this woman. Notice how the disciples disregarded the urgency of her needs in Mark 5:31, “And his disciples said to him, you see the crowd pressing in on you, how can you say, who touched me (Mark 5:31)?” These men who are representing the community of faith failed their daughter. Instead of offering comfort, they adopted the role of “bodyguards,” blocking those who needed healing, comfort, and the touch of God’s grace away from Jesus’ blessings.

This passage shows the male servants of the Lord negatively. We, Bible scholars, know that a handful of women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, Joanna, and the others. Their stories are much like that of Mary’s healing to support Jesus’ ministry to all those who believe.

The institution of the Christian church was established for all believers. The

church has made considerable strides; for example, in 1857, The United Brethren General Conference passed a resolution that no woman should be allowed to preach. In 1866, Helenor M. Davidson was ordained a deacon by the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, making her the first ordained woman in the Methodist tradition.

As we look back at the history of women preachers in the United Church of Christ, Antoinette Brown, at the Congregational Church in New York, was first to become licensed and ordained to preach within the United Church of Christ on or about 1850. However, Brown decided to pause her ministerial career to write for Frederick Douglass, the Abolitionist.

So many male believers, particularly preachers, make the grave mistake of misinterpreting the Epistles of Paul. Paul's theology did include women. Misinterpreting Paul's theology does the church, the body of Christ, a disservice and carries the "disease" to every part of the body. "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and training in righteousness so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient and equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16)."

The Hope Found in the Good News

There is so much controversy over the dress code, yet Paul spoke of women with reference and respect. In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul's instructions were not to be taken out of context.²³ He spoke very poignantly about how the woman should cover herself

²³ Direction, *The Role of Women in the Church*, <https://directionjournal.org/9/1/role-of-women-in-church-pauline.html>.

for the sake of dignity. Paul makes every effort to establish this newly formed church, Corinth, with the proper tools to worship God in reverence and holiness.

The roads were unpaved, the people wore sandals, the sun's heat was scorching hot, and covering the heads had several meanings; one crucial fact was to avoid heatstroke. Holy men, the Nazarite, shaved their heads, lived in the desert, and were honored to do this in their walk with God. Today, some resemblance of that custom is found in church where men remove their hats in worship in reverence to God.

Using the history of the Old Testament's Jewish purity traditions ²⁴ along with the over-arching lack of respect for women in leadership roles, particularly ministry, the question for the church in decline is, "Are you willing to stand by and watch the church die?"

The paradigm shifts from "The slave mentality" or the alleged inferiority of the Negro races" of Booker T. Washington's philosophy were not the social construct or of W.E.B. DuBois. Yet, for Blacks in Atlanta, their issue was not much different; they were warned as silently as we in Pittsburgh are warned not to get too uppity.²⁵

Women are waiting. "Waiting," Dr. King said, "Has almost always meant never."²⁶ Women recognize, as King also said, "Recognize the same old bone tossed to them in the past is now handed on a platter." Far too many have been duped into believing that serving in lesser ministerial capacities; for example, Licensed Local

²⁴ Direction, *The Role of Women in the Church*, <https://directionjournal.org/9/1/role-of-women-in-church-pauline.html>: 410.

²⁵ Eugene Robinson, Essay, *Disintegration, the Splintering of Black America* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2011), 29.

²⁶ "Waiting, Dr. King," <https://gradesaver.com>.

Pastors or the diaconal ministry has the same level of respect the Ordained Pastor receives. The “Old Guards” are emanating the evils of a “Forbearance System” (a system designed to add weight-burdens), an invisible burden to weaken your desires and kill your dreams toward ordination. This brings to mind the recent public announcement made in the Vatican by the Pope, who plans to review the status of women to become deacons.

The Church, which once stood on “solid” grounds, seems “unstable” and “unsure” of its purpose. The Church is trying to adapt to a specific demand for people to fill the pews. There have been noticeable changes made to accommodate the dwindling numbers in attendance. The time of worship changed from the universal eleven to satisfy the aging community. The fear that the aging population has fallen under the “If” clause: “If it rains” or “If it snows,” I cannot promise that I will come out. The worship time across Christendom nationally was 11:00 o’clock a.m. In responding to the aging community, the Church dropped its time of services to accommodate them. The request to change the worship hour for some younger people came with mixed emotions yet; “Even in highly liturgical traditions with set lectionary readings and other liturgical prescriptions,” ²⁷ the aging community seems comfortable with a scaled-down message and fewer hymns sung.

²⁷ Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations, A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 34.

The Growing Need for Female Pastors-Sisters found at the Tomb

There is indeed much work to be done as we look at the obstacles women have had to endure to become authorized ministers. Jesus' words in Mark 5:34, "Daughter, your faith has made you well," come as a double-edged sword.

It is interesting to add to this study that "African women theologians are calling on their male counterparts to engage in theological dialogue to draw afresh life-giving resource from African religion-cultural heritages that will support and enable the full humanity of women and integrity of all creation."²⁸

Though the writers of the Bible overlooked the many women who served in leadership roles, there are women whose moral status did not go unnoticed. Miriam, the prophetess and sister of Moses and Aaron in Exodus 15:20-21, Deborah in Judges, Isaiah's wife, Isaiah 8:3, Prophetess Huldah in 2 Chronicles 34:14-23, and Esther who was included in the *Ketuvim* or writings of the Bible to save her people, the Jews from extinction. God is still on the throne and has spoken in sundry ways.

In Ezekiel 34:4, there is a profound message to the false prophets (ministers) and the church. These words written under the inspiration of God are the very words that frighten me; "You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them (Ezekiel 34:4)."

African women played a significant role in redefining ecclesiological identities in Africa. The sisters from the Ivory Continent have made great strides to model the female

²⁸ Chammah J. Kaunda and Benjamin J. Pokol, *An African Feminist Re-culturation Perspective, African Christianity, Myth of Creation, and Gender Justice*. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 5-19.

disciples of antiquity. The Circle of Concerned African Woman Theologians guided the gender discourse in the African contexts in a formative fashion.

Women innately are Care Givers

Women innately know how to bind the wounded heart, bring comfort to the weak and infirmed, and joy to smooth away the sorrowful. Women are born to serve. The world asks, “Where did the woman go after Jesus healed her?” In many of the miracle stories in the Bible, Jesus asked that they go and show themselves to the Church or some authority to validate that they were “touched” by Him. There were just a few that returned to show their gratitude.

The Apostle Paul indeed had his work cut out for him as he speaks of the body of Christ, a united front. Today with this unsettling time of national pain, a slogan is making its way around the world; “We are all in this together.”

Nowhere else in the bible is any more said of our subject, “Despite the similarities, some interpreters emphasize the social disparity between Jairus and the woman. Jairus is a known and prominent leader of the synagogue with a family and large household. The text suggests that his daughter had her own bedroom. The unknown woman with her issue of blood in the face of the poor.”²⁹

M. Sydney Park, “Inerrancy and Blood: Women and Christology in Leviticus 12 and 15, and Mark 4:21-43,” takes on a holistic view of what feminists understand as very awkward, if not tactless in public discourse to speak of a woman’s hemorrhaging or

²⁹ James L. Bailey, *Currents in Theology and Mission* 44, no. 4 (October, 2017): 30.

menstruation. “Despite this unease, Scripture in no way demonstrates that same awkwardness about women’s physiology in any of the three texts at hand. How trite to brand the woman in Mark 5:25 as “unclean” in what is a normal biological function...a point well noted by feminist theologians.”³⁰

Is that the role of the church to block all those who desire to know Him more intimately? Is it the church’s role to weed out or screen the women they have characterized as bad for them or the church? “In a time of religious division, Bucer was a man of understanding because the tragic disfiguring separations of the Reformation had begun, and Bucer spent the largest part of his life working to overcome them.”³¹

The unknown woman in our Markan text leaves a lot for discussion. Although theologians continue to question the authority of John Mark as its author, the issue of a woman’s biological function is dismissed or maligned as though she is to be despised rather than respected for being the bearer of children and the fountain of life.

The blatant disregard of a woman’s natural body function goes against nature. “So, God created humankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female, he created them. God blessed them, and God said to thee, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”, and so forth. “But for the man, there was not found a helper as his partner (Genesis 2:20).”

³⁰ M. Sydney Park, *Inerrancy and Blood: Women and Christology in Leviticus 12 and 15 and Mark 4:21-43*, Presbyterian 45, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 83-95.

³¹ Robert Stupperich, Bucer, Martin. Op. cit., 113-114.

Conclusion

Mark's gospel goes hand in hand with having had an intimate relationship with Jesus. Jesus left each situation; the man healed of demons-free, the woman free of her blood "dis-ease," and the twelve-year-old girl "alive." In each slice of the "sandwich," we saw the tenacity and willpower to seek change. Change is a solid dynamic. It is both frightening and exciting when heading toward a set of new values.

Women have that tenacity for breaking molds to bring change. Women in ministry come to the pulpit swallowing their pride, praising God for His constancy to remain faithful through one's ups and downs as He goes with you from weakness to strength. Women do not have to be reminded to cover themselves nor whip their sex drive into submission. Instead, the believer is reminded that "We are all saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8)."

Women have had to develop their voices. Much like our heroine, the woman with the "dis-ease," sometimes you must push your way through to "touch" Jesus by taking low. It is the virtuous woman who recognizes she does not need to make her mark in Christendom by "Any means necessary."³² No, nothing is gained by force, or any means possible. Yolanda Adams, a national gospel singer, offers hope, "The Battle is not yours, it is the Lord's (2 Chronicles 20:15)."

It is interesting to add the work of the first African American female Bishop, Leontine Kelly. Bishop Kelly was ordained in the United Methodist Church. Kelly climbed into the seat of Bishop, opening doors that only a few women of excellence have

³² Malcolm X, <https://www.bing.com/search?q=by+any+means+necessary+speech&filters=Speech> June 28, 1964.

had the privilege to follow. Kelly started as a Lay Preacher, then completed the Course of Study at Wesley Theological and Master of Divinity. Kelly became a deacon and, several years later, an Elder.³³ Why so many steps for a woman? The curriculum designed to discourage her only helped to elevate her...praise be to God; she rose with double honor on her side.

Our hero, the woman with the “dis-ease,” put one foot in front of the other and walked to her destiny. Much can be discerned for the woman who finds this text appealing and then uses it for her call to serve. The text suggests that if you choose to follow Christ, you do not have to fit a specific mold. The text further suggests that if you have a willingness and hunger to follow Christ, nothing or no one has the power to stop you from reaching your goal.

Discipleship is an essential theme in Mark. What it means to follow Jesus is at the heart of his Gospel and scholarly discussions tend to center on his teachings about discipleship to the apostles, and their repeated missteps. Mark champions the kind of discipleship modeled by the women in the text who acted in their seeking out Jesus and their response to him, and depicting the insufficient discipleship of the apostles by repeatedly underscoring what they do not do (their inactivity) and or what they do that is misguided or characterized by misunderstanding. Mark’s portrayal of female discipleship have challenged first-century cultural norms and assumptions concerning women.

Mark’s genius lies not in telling a story about Jesus but in creating conditions under which the reader may experience the peculiar quality of God’s good news (Mark

³³ Timeline of Women in Methodism, Feb. 22, 2019, <https://www.umc.org/who-we-are/the-roots-of-the-united-methodist-family-tree-digging-deeper>.

1:14). It is more than a matter of being led up to a mountain where Jesus is transfigured (Mark 9:2-8) before being steered to Golgotha, where He is crucified (Mark 5:22-25). Though these are critical stops along the way, the Evangelist hurries on along breathlessly, “immediately” making sure that the reader lurches with the characters into one pothole after another. William Wrede spotted passages in Mark that are intensely self-contradictory: demons (Mark 1:34) and beneficiaries (Mark 1:44) who know Jesus’ identity yet are silenced.”³⁴

The day is fast approaching when the Church must come out from behind the “safety” of the stained glass windows and step outside where the work of Christ’s disciples are waiting. Sadly, congregations are facing a decline in membership along with the most pressing lack of keeping up with the economic standards to pay their pastor’s equitably. God’s congregations are hurting, and their cries are going unheard. There is a great crowd of female witnesses waiting to fill the void.

Anna Hickey-Moody wrote in her essay that faith is an ontological state, an orientation, and a capacity to act. In other words, it is not just a feeling or substance of one’s belief system. This essay of Hickey-Moody’s is a philosophical perspective introducing a new materialist understanding of faith. She quotes from Matthews-Jones and Jones, “Religiosity is not simply an internal belief that comes to find codified form in the written texts of religious institutions. Religion is also constructed in the written texts of religious institutions.”³⁵

³⁴ *What One May Judge, What We Cannot Know*, <https://ministrymatters-com.utsdayton.idm.oclc.org/reader/9781426750199#chapter11.xhtml!1/12>.

³⁵ Anna Hickey-Moody, *Faith, Philosophy Today*, Volume 63, Issue 4 (Fall 2019).

Using the pericope of Mark 5:28-4, the final project will be praxis for the Church as it seeks to develop racial harmony and understanding in congregations. Disharmony causes splinters, and splinters without proper extraction can lead to wounds and worse, amputation. Jesus' words ring loudly today to those who do not know him. His words to the disciples, "Who do men say that I Am is a question Jesus continues to ask (Matthew 16:15)?"

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

“If you go to Philadelphia today and stop at the corner of Sixth and Lombard streets, you stand on hallowed ground. Here, one of early America’s leading reformers built an inter-nationally famous church, wrote pamphlets of protest that served as models for generations to come, and championed liberty and justice for all.”¹The reformer I speak of is Bishop Richard Allen, founder of the first African Methodist church, “Mother Bethel,” located in South Philadelphia.

Newman’s *Freedom’s Prophet* is a biography of Richard Allen as the founding father, engaged in developing a nation within a nation and joining blacks to one another in separate institutions within the new republic.² Bishop Allen’s powerful work for the AME Church was not absent of forging friends with his white colleagues. “Although a promoter of black autonomy, he articulated a mantra of interracial harmony and black civic participation.”³

¹ Richard S. Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet, Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2008), 1.

² The New York Review of books, 128, www.nybooks.com.

³ The New York Review of books, 128, www.nybooks.com.

As the mother of two adult African American sons, the murder of George Floyd⁴ and Atatiana Jefferson⁵ demands that we join their mothers (and Fathers) as they grieve the loss of their slain adult children. These untimely deaths were caused by the evils created under the guise of policemen “doing their jobs,” yet the world knows otherwise. Racism is the perpetrator, and hate is the crime. George Floyd’s death was unprovoked. Atatiana Jefferson’s death falls in the same gamut of being black without power. These latest violent crimes by police officers have the entire nation asking for justice, chanting *Black Lives Matter*. Racism is not a new evil for this country. Right here in Pittsburgh, PA, a study was just recently released in terms of its livability. This study sanctioned by Mayor Bill Peduto called Pittsburgh the number one city for racism. Inequality across Gender and Race, 2019:

This study reports Pittsburgh’s Black women are five times more likely to live in poverty than Pittsburgh’s White men. These inequalities are not limited to income; comparable patterns exist across the examined domains.⁶

The question on the tongues of millions is: What changed here in the United States of America so drastically, the “Home of the Brave and the Land of the Free,” which caused the large city’s inhabited by African Americans to be targeted?⁷ Yet, whatever this evil is, the church has vowed not to sit idle. If the church started it, then it must be the church that brings it to its end. Dr. King’s march on Washington brought the

⁴ Killing of George Floyd, May 20, 2020, <https://www.bing.com/search?q=george%20floyd&pc=cosp&ptag=G6C1N1234D050120A98C4AF66BD&form=CONBDF&conlogo=CT3210127>.

⁵ Atatiana Koquice Jefferson, <https://www.bing.com/search?q=atatiana%20jefferson%20shooting&pc=cosp&ptag=G6C1N1234D050120A98C4AF66BD&form=CONBDF&conlogo=CT3210127>.

⁶ City of Pittsburgh Gender Equity Commission, September 2019.

⁷ African American Cities Targeted, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2509618>

nation to see that segregation must come down now!⁸ King gave his life for the cause of equality. Today we celebrate Dr. King's self-less work that "all men would be made free." With the Civil Rights Movement in 1963 and the march on Washington, DC, where more than 200,000 gathered peaceably in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial to demand equal justice for all citizens under the law, the legislature passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act was designed to guarantee equal voting rights, outlaw discrimination in restaurants, theatres, and other public accommodations: yet the Black man is still not free.

The church hosted meetings to educate the Black population on how to move forward to dismantle racism. Park's refusal led to a successful boycott in Montgomery.⁹ They were remarkably effective and successful. We can applaud Rosa Parks and her impatience to endure further public humiliation as she protested by refusing to sit at the back of the bus.

The church has been "lulled" into some strange kind of sleep like "Rip Van Winkle,"¹⁰ The Civil Rights Movement spearheaded by King was successful. It was more than fifty years ago, and though the Black man no longer is fighting to end bigotry and

⁸ March on Washington, <https://www.britannica.com/print/article/636444>.

⁹ "Rosa Parks," <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/rosa-parks>.

¹⁰ Rip Van Winkle, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>, <https://www.bing.com/search?q=rip%20van%20winkle%20story&pc=cosp&ptag=G6C1N1234D050120A98C4AF66BD&form=CONBDF&conlogo=CT3210127>.

desegregation, this new battle is for his life. Today there are thousands of sympathizers demanding a radical change, chanting, “Black lives do matter!”¹¹

The pandemic (Covid-19) was an evil that no one was prepared to deal with. They were deemed “non-essential” throughout the country and demanded to close and stay home.¹² Every church, synagogue, and mosque obeyed, avoiding repercussions. As communities of faith, we all mourned with the families affected by the pandemic and remained home. Without face-to-face meetings, most churches relied on social media and the safety of their telephones. Some churches, like mine, made phone calls, sent newsletters, and, of course, prayed. Then the world went indoors, and all churches went numb. The old patriarchal system “(A term that was derided and abandoned a decade ago) has come roaring back to life.”¹³

Charlotte Higgins, in her article, put a top hat and tails on the word patriarchy. She stood it up and called it bad names; it is “Unlike democracy, autocracy or oligarchy.” Patriarchy is male supremacy, a system designed for the benefit of men.”¹⁴ Where are the warriors when you need them? The women who run the kitchens of churches, set the communion table up and will not stand for “sass” from the kids (Romans 12:5, RSV).

Even though our government officials have waved the (green light) to resume,

¹¹ Black Lives Matter, <https://www.bing.com/search?q=rip%20van%20winkle%20story&pc=cosp&ptag=G6C1N1234D050120A98C4AF66BD&form=CONBDF&conlogo=CT3210127https://www.bing.com/search?q=black%20lives%20matter%20movement&pc=cosp&ptag=G6C3N1234D050120A98C4AF66BD&form=CONBDF&conlogo=CT3210127>.

¹² Covid-19 pandemic, <https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2020/03/19/gov>.

¹³ Charlotte Higgins, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/jun/22/the-age-of-patriarchy-how-an-unfashionable-idea-became-a-rallying-cry-for-feminism-today>.

¹⁴ Charlotte Higgins, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/jun/22/the-age-of-patriarchy-how-an-unfashionable-idea-became-a-rallying-cry-for-feminism-today>.

things will never be “business as usual.” The Coronavirus has not been eradicated. Daily victims are reported sick among those at-risk. It is not wise to “carry on” without regard for their safety.¹⁵

As a result of the stay-at-home emergency order, we communed outside in cars while I served the Eucharist when Easter came. It was a beautiful time in the Lord, and words of encouragement brought out the smiles. Many other pastors offered “Zoom.” Zoom Video Communications, Inc. is an American Communications Technology Company headquartered in San Jose, California. It provides video telephony and online chat services through a cloud-based peer-to-peer software platform and is used for teleconferencing, telecommuting, distance education, and social relations.¹⁶

Given the pandemic and the “thief that crept in the church” and caught us “asleep,” these following few chapters of this report will be dedicated toward the assumption that with this Prophetic Preaching Precis, there will be data to support the assumptions. We can root out and begin anew doing ministry with the gifts of innovative ideas and strong-minded women in “Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates To Ordaining Women.” The thief came to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10), assuming that the people were fast asleep. We, the church, are separated, and divided gave the enemy a sense of false glory.

President Barack Obama addressed the United Nations General Assembly in 2014. In his speech, he spoke of division and asked for their collective support to choose

¹⁵Coronavirus, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>, 2019.

¹⁶ Zoom_Video_Communications, https://zoom_video_communications.com.

hope over fear.¹⁷ There is much hope. Christians around the world are joining Black America in the fight towards dismantling this evil, and it is apparent that they are serious.

I believe that the lack of having women in this effort has -by-in-large-caused so much damage. Mothers, sisters, aunts, and wives have stood in the background being the “cleanup woman-and the problem solvers,” the chief cook and bottle washer and have done it while holding a baby on one hip to fix dinner, stir the pot of potatoes, put the child down for a nap, clear the kitchen dishes and converse with the hubby while helping a child with homework. At the day’s beginning, the mother showers, dresses for work, and returns home to start the dance again.

The patriarchal system is being challenged. In this historical account, documentation is being offered to propose as the church loosens the reigns, it re-evaluates its organizational structure. It accepts women in their rightful places as a “helpmate (Genesis 2:24),” fully human, fully capable, and fully able to do the work of the ministry laid before them.

So many officials ignored the warning signs and blatantly disregarded WHO (World Health Organization) when it called for quarantines. Now that a sense of calm has been restored, the question remains, do we take this time of national emergency to “Put our houses in order?”

The house that I refer to is the Church. In the Biblical Foundations Chapter, the text, Mark 5:25-37, discussed the “sandwich.” One of the layers was the pericope of the Woman with the issue of blood. The writer concurs that women have “issues.” The

¹⁷ President Barack Obama, 2014 Speech, <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=obama+2014+speech&docid=607996699808629735&mid=9E7477A686018AFA799C9E7477A686018AFA799C&view=detail&FORM=VIRE>.

problems that face the United States today can be broken down in much the same way the Markan text does.

The researcher proposes that the research is used here to study the lack of women pastors in the church with this Historical Foundations Paper. This chapter will provide evidence showing the great need for women preachers. The study will also make suggestions for how the added women preachers will invigorate the church and put it where those who need it desperately. The Markan pericope attests that women have issues (Mark 5:25-37), and faith in Jesus Christ will make you whole.

When Bishop Richard Allen imagined the need for a separate place of worship for his congregation of Black folk, he took his dream off his imaginary drawing board and made it a reality. Through tear-stained eyes and a heavy heart, a monumental church was built. It was Allen “Who saw it not robbery (Philippians 2:6-11)” to appoint Jarena Lee, the first African American female, to the pulpit to set the stage for women of color to serve. The psalmist said, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble (Psalms 46).” These words of assurance bring a sense of relief to the believer and calm that the church, the strong tower, is equipped to offer consolation, help, comfort, and peace over tumultuous times in a believer’s life. Yet, what do we say to the one who calls the church, and no one is there?

This is not an isolated case, a recent study done on churches in decline: After WW11, a huge boom of new churches grew from within denominational loyalties and the legacies of Christendom. However, during the turbulent 1960s, membership in traditional mainline churches began to drop sharply, and the trend of decline continued throughout the second half of the twentieth century. The drop in membership closely followed the decline in new-church developments.¹⁸ Speak of addressing the strengths and weaknesses of the church.

¹⁸ H. Stanley Wood, *Extraordinary Leaders in Extraordinary Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2006), xvii.

Those that are growing offer a myriad of services that are pastoral counseling, childcare, and other supportive classes, such as exercise and weight loss.¹⁹

The number of hate groups active in the USA rose to its highest level in two decades last year, according to an annual survey released Wednesday by the Southern Poverty Law Center.²⁰ For many mainline churches, the decline in membership caused them to make severe cutbacks in their pastoral staff. By doing this when emergency needs like offering counsel to families dealing with violent deaths, hate crimes, or suicide, for example, “it is therefore necessary for theologians not to dismiss the effects of post-traumatic stress.”²¹

In many instances, there needs to be a female preacher “on-call” and available to offer pastoral care or counseling for the women members, yet the fact remains the senior (male) the pastor does not have the vision to present this idea to the Consistory more concerned about the budget. This is “alarming.” The victim, your female parishioner during this emergency is without solace and critical care and worse left to grieve and mourn alone.

Over the following few pages, the researcher intends to prove one important fact. Jesus believed it necessary for women to serve; these women embraced his mother evangelized. Like Mary, Lazarus’ sister stayed gleaning on his every word up to and including trembling at the foot of the cross.²² It had to be devastating to watch Jesus

¹⁹ ZUMBA,
<https://www.bing.com/search?q=zumba%20dance%20workout&pc=cosp&ptag=G6C7N1234D050120A98C4AF66BD&form=CONBDF&conlogo=CT3210127>.

²⁰ Southern Poverty Law Center, www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/02/20/hate-groups-white-power-supremacists-southern-poverty-law-center/2918416002/.

²¹ Mitzi J. Smith, *Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (In) justice, Intersectionality, and Biblical Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), 151.

²² Jesus our Savior, <https://www.simplybible.com/f937-jesus-our-saviour.htm>.

beaten and crucified. It could not have been something Mary and his mother were prepared for. She lost her son, saw him hang and die, and then heard him offer forgiveness for his murders.

Mary knew the moment would come when Jesus would fulfill the Scriptures, suffer by crucifixion, be buried in a borrowed tomb, but on the third day, would get back up. The Church needs more women like Mary, female preachers who can “stay the course” to offer solace, comfort, and peace taught by Jesus’ model as Savior (Matthew 16:19).

There is a sense of invasion or disconnect for a woman to discuss feminine issues of sexual and domestic violence with a man. This area covers child sexual abuse, domestic violence abuse with a huge void for homophobia issues. The church has been silent in helping those in need of counseling.²³ These people are “falling between the cracks” and go without attention only to show up in the emergency rooms of hospitals and, worst, the morgue. Blackburn Center is my “go-to” resource for matters beyond the scope of my expertise²⁴.

The researcher sees the woman of the Markan text in chapter five as a prime example. Had the woman been able to share her distress with another woman and been told that what she was going through is temporary, perhaps it would not have taken living in humiliation for twelve years or emptying her bank account. It just might be a girl thing! Women feel less threatened when trauma occurs if she has the availability of a woman pastor. As we see with these horrible killings of our Black children, the shock of

²³ Blackburn Center, <https://www.blackburncenter.org/>.

²⁴ Blackburn Center, <https://www.blackburncenter.org/>.

someone near and dear dying (a child or husband or son) is a tragedy. Typically, the first responder is a man who most likely is the pastor.

Men typically are not as compassionate as women. As a result, men are less likely to understand how to console a mother in her desperate need for compassion and comfort. Men, as compassionate as they try, it is next to impossible to console a mother in the loss of a child, even if that child is fifty years old.

A woman losing a child to SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome), the unexplained death of a child is so painful. There are no words to handle the emotional distress. Sadly, in this day and age, close touch and holding a woman by the pastor is many times discouraged for many other reasons.

In the balance of this paper, the researcher offers reasons for the need for more female preachers. The subject of “Developing Racial Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women” has come to what appears to be a “stale” or “moot” subject. The researcher has not lost hope, yet there must be a willingness to admit when there is a need for help. The Church has been for some time ignoring its congregations’ “issues.”

The progressive Church will appreciate this study, the stagnant Church not so much. But, without pointing fingers, change is inevitable. The researcher wants to use this study to bring our Church into the millennium. The test group should be comprised of non-members of my church and perhaps even non-believers. It is always interesting to listen to those not vested in your project to get a clear perspective of whether your project will be worthwhile. Christians who have little faith but come to a preacher with one of the above-mentioned issues find the female pastor compassionate, willing to listen, and go the extra mile to guide the woman to where she can get help.

Jesus was building that kind of relationship with the people he ministered to. Notice that his famous words to Peter were that he would teach him to “Fish for men (Luke 5:1-11)” and establish a relationship and strongly believed that it was Jesus who brought Jairus’ twelve-year-old daughter back from death. And likewise, with these words, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease (Mark 5:34).” The weak may find strength, and the lost will be assured that there is room at the “Inn,” Those unsure of Salvation are redeemed.

It is imperative that the Church takes a different approach (not so much a new one) but a different one. People are hurting. Families are struggling, and children are taking their lives. The Church may come to see that they are sorely needed. The Jesus ethical, “When I was hungry, you fed me, and when I was naked you clothed me, is still needed (Matt 25:35).” Something strange happened that day in Jerusalem (Pentecost Sunday) (Acts 2:1-21) when people came from Asia to get a glimpse of Jesus. That day was spectacular for some, yet there were others who “brooded” over the fact that they were not there. Wilda C. Gafney, “Womanist Midrash” offers a unique perspective of the Jewish women of the Torah. “Some of us found our voice and blessed him and his momma, and he blessed those of us who would never birth a child to die on their crosses.”²⁵

After 2,000 years, the plan started fraying at the edges (like the people of the Roman Church). People were getting agitated and discombobulated over the decline of membership and the loss of children. These changes caused a lot of grumbling. Not

²⁵ Wilda C. Gafney, *Womanist Midrash, A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Thronhtml?id=mfoud*, EBSCO Publishing: eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) printed on 6/3/2020, Claremont School of Theology.

everyone could handle the uneasiness. Yet, studies have proven that change is inevitable, “some private knowledge needs to be made public for healing to occur.”²⁶

Jesus did not allow the demoniac to follow as a disciple once he was healed. It seemed important for this man now healed to go and tell his family how good God is. Likewise, Jairus was not converted, and Jesus did not insist that day once he brought his twelve-year-old back from death that he and his family believe. No, it was important for those personally affected to spread the Good News.

As the woman with the bleeding pushed her way into where Jesus was to touch his clothes, she was healed immediately but was also not told to fill out an application to join His church. No, once Jesus handled her “issues,” she did not need to be convinced who did it...these three ways to be witnesses of him and the role he played for all eternity, the Messiah.

This Historical Foundation paper will, therefore, look for ways to develop racial harmony for a united Church, one that will not be complicit and turn and look the other way when its people need them to stare in the eye of this evil, “I am sick and tired of being sick and tired” (Fannie Lou Hamer, American voting, and women’s rights activist).²⁷

Today, in the mourning of those who died along with George Floyd, the nation senses another kind of pandemic, the loss of hundreds of young people to gun violence and police brutality. Black America is calling for justice, and the world is in solidarity

²⁶ Nancy Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations*, A New Handbook (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 9.

²⁷ Fannie Lou Hamer, <https://www.bing.com/search?q=fanny%20lou%20hammer%20quote&pc=cosp&ptag=G6C1N1234D050120A98C4AF66BD&form=CONBDF&conlogo=CT3210127>.

with them. There is a move affront calling for “change.” The change has to be with churches acknowledging their part (See the United Church of Christ’s study, “White Privilege, let’s talk)”²⁸ their statement on June 1, 2020, “The virus infecting the killers of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd and other Black people in America are much older than Covid-19. It will stop killing people only if society, the church, and especially white people focus relentlessly on a cure, over the long haul, using resources that are already available.”²⁹ “Those who cannot remember from the past are condemned to repeat it. Life can only be understood backward but must be lived forward.”³⁰

With this study, the researcher will present some “issues” that may “discolor” and hold women, God’s Prophetic daughters, back from being welcomed into the ministry of Word and sacrament. Starting with:

1. Personal Health-Self-care
2. Emotional Wellbeing (Violence and abuse)
3. Mental health,
4. Spiritual health-wellbeing,
5. Morality
6. Reproduction
7. Poverty and wealth
8. Ordination

²⁸ White Privilege *Let’s Talk, a Resource for Transformational Dialogue*, <http://privilege.uccpages.org>.

²⁹ United Church of Christ News (recent headlines) *Racism a deadly virus that white people must help eradicate*, UCC panel says.

³⁰ Soren Kierkegaard, *Healing the Scars: A Theological-Hermeneutical Analysis of Violence from the Perspectives of Both perpetrators and victims*, Scriptura 106 (2011): 26.

9. The sacred and the divine

10. Self-Locating-Touchstone for Preaching

Personal Health-Self-care

A Woman's own physical wellbeing Gynecological health, issues that, if gone undetected, can become cancerous. Today's healthcare industry demands such an inflated cost of insurance that many women and young girls go without proper medical attention. Every woman by nature menstruates. Keeping one's hygiene up is not always possible. Only recently did the United States Treasury Department demand that each taxpayer has health insurance and would penalize them by yearend if they were found without health insurance. A plan was put into place where everyone here in the US had healthcare under President Barack Obama called Obama Care: (Obama Care is a nickname for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, a health reform law signed on March 23, 2010, by President Barack Obama.)³¹ Obama Care seeks to reform health insurance and healthcare in the United States by creating new rules for insurers, offering cost assistance for health insurance, and more.

Unfortunately, being threatened by the Federal government to have healthcare was not very democratic, nor did it change the families' financial circumstances for the better. My clients (I am a tax practitioner) were thrown into another state of despair when they realized that after signing up for Obama Care, they became more confused about their healthcare and further in debt to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The young girl

³¹ Obama Care, <https://obamacarefacts.com/what-is-obamacare>.

in a financially struggling home may go for long periods without the necessities of life; food, hygiene products, adequate baby supplies, groceries, utilities paid, and rent or mortgage. Mothers and single parents cannot afford to be sick. They are the “go-to” persons, the ones who juggle everything, and “God forbid” they get sick. They fall in bed exhausted, only to do that same routine the next day.

In most cultures, family dynamics deem the woman, the housewife, the nurturer, caregiver, teacher (home-schooled children), cook, accountant, and counselor while fully seen as “self-sacrifice from as far back as early Christianity. Keeping the house clean was one of those chores a woman had to do.

Emotional Wellbeing

As Chanequa Walker-Barnes wrote about the myth of strength, “Ask anyone, Black or White, male or female-to describe Black women, and the most common answer is likely to be strong. The Strong Black Woman is a legendary figure, typified by extraordinary capacities for caregiving and for suffering without complaint.”³² The Strong Black Woman has to always be available for everyone else in the family while ignoring her own needs. By day’s end, she falls asleep out of exhaustion.

Violence and abuse:

Walker-Barnes commented, “Nowhere in society is the Strong Black Woman more ubiquitous than the Christian Church. The church reinforces the mythology of the

³² Chanequa Walker-Barnes, *Too Heavy A Yoke*, Black Women and the Burden of Strength (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 5.

Strong Black Woman by silencing, ignoring, and even romanticizing the suffering of Black women. Rather than offering a balm to heal the wounds of Black women who cry out about their pain, the church admonishes them with platitudes such as “God won’t give you any more than you can bear,” and if He brought you to it, he will bring you through it.”³³

Special needs -the handicap:

In the study negotiating the Disabled Body, Anna Rebecca Solvag:

In many cultures, people project what they consider to be the “perfect body” and enforce this notion on others to adore and imitate. This perfect body is presented as young, able, light-skinned, and athletic. Solevag introduces theories of disability that have been used to analyze cases of disabled bodies, which are selected from early Christian texts, including the Apocrypha: narrative prosthesis, illness as a metaphor, disability, and the male gaze stigma and the normate, monster theory, and Crip theory.³⁴

The names Jarena Lee (first African American female preacher), Harriet Tubman (activist), and Sojourner Truth (gave herself the name in 1843) were contemporaries. Tubman exploited the photographic image of herself to raise funds and spread public knowledge of her life, along with Frederick Douglass (1818-1895).

After the Emancipation, the women in this study sometimes fought back the urge to go public with their desire to preach. It would not be until Jarena Lee in 1817 (February 11, 1783-February 3, 1864), after attending a service at Mother Bethel AME,

³³ Chanequa Walker-Barnes, *Too Heavy A Yoke*, Black Women and the Burden of Strength (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 5.

³⁴ Anna Rebecca Solevag, *Negotiating the Disabled Body: Representations of Disability in Early Christian Texts* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2018), 191.

that she gave in to her passion for preaching. Lee had never taken the pulpit she commented:

“During the exhortation, God made manifest power in a manner sufficient to show the world that I was called to labor according to my ability and the grace given unto me, in the vineyard of the good husbandman.” Lee preached the gospel to racially mixed Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptist, and Wesleyan audiences across the mid-Atlantic, Lower Canada, Cincinnati, Detroit, and New England, and she did so at a time when slavery was legal, and neither African American nor women could own property or vote.³⁵

On January 1, 1863, thousands were overlooked in the South. While the Thirteenth Amendment was set into law, thus outlawing slavery anywhere in the United States, on December 6, 1865, when it was secured, the needed 27 of 36 states’ approval was not signed until 130 years later, on March 16, 1995, that Mississippi finally got around to ratifying it.”³⁶ Now that Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, Blacks are leaving the South in search of new homes. They have been told they are free to go wherever they so desire. Hundreds and thousands of men, women, and children headed North. Harriet Tubman (1822-1913), born Araminta Ross was an American abolitionist and political activist. Harriet was born into slavery. Tubman escaped and subsequently made some thirteen missions to rescue approximately seventy

³⁵ Eric Washington, *Trailblazing African American Preacher, and “self-made” woman*, Christianity Today.com/history/people/pastorsandpreachers/Jarena-lee/.

³⁶ The ratification of Mississippi, <https://www.bing.com/search?q=did%20mississippi%20know%20they%20were%20free%3F&pc=cosp&ptag=G6C24N1234D050120A98C4AF66BD&form=CONBDF&conlogo=CT3210127>.

enslaved people, including family and friends, using the network of antislavery activists and safe houses as the Underground Railroad.³⁷

Tubman was fearless. Yet there were those “stricken” with fear, and the psychological damage left a scar across their hearts and minds. Beaten into submission, these people could not make the trip to freedom. Tubman had to leave them behind.

South African Family Practice retells the story of “*When past and present collide*.”³⁸ Much like her contemporary, Sojourner Truth left the plantation where she had lived for over seventeen years. However, Truth in her biography left her family behind for the same reason Tubman experienced with those she tried to help. Truth’s husband and children had been so “brainwashed” and terrified of their slaveholder that they would never adjust to freedom. The very fact that these people had been enslaved for so many years, they were trapped within themselves and incapable of making such a move.

In an earlier class, PTSD, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was introduced. The presenter used herself for one of the examples. Girls raised by foster parents have experienced sexual abuse and mental pain so devastating that this history may remain with them for a lifetime. In addition, there are repeated stories of incest —situations so

³⁷Harriet Tubman,
<https://www.bing.com/search?q=harriet+tubman&filters=ufn%3a%22harriet+tubman%22+sid%3a%220de568332d5e39657b00551be4615177%22&form=EDGEAR&q=MB&cvid=4c5afa117dcc4706830dcc97fee.ccdac&cc=US&setlang=enUS&elv=AY3%21uAY7tbNNZGZ2yiGNjfMZbTc7B5MwAg6B5b7f682tCV5%21vzjLfhO0F2UDi5rZpBEyzDB7gVovY7evtokKUHvucKjzCW6lrfctHZ3LQvxp&plvar=0>.

³⁸ Sarel Brand and De Wet Wolmarans, Journal, South African Family Practice, “When past and present collide: A concise clinical review of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) within the context of family practice,” <https://hdl.net/10520/EJC-4f4fb3d10>.

damaging that if the child victim does not receive psychological counseling, they will forever feel “thrown away.”

The gathering of data for this Historical Foundations Chapter was done hoping that it will be used in “Developing Harmony in the Church As it relates to Ordinary Women.” Unfortunately, the Church has ignored the cry of its daughters in such a way that it has caused further infractions and “dis-ease.” Going from Jarena Lee to Sojourner Truth (Isabelle Van Wagener), the name given by the master of the plantation she worked at over seventeen years, comes to the topic of developing racial harmony boldly in her delivery and strong, deliberate preaching style. Sojourner Truth would be what James Cone might call a feminist theologian.

In all the pain and hardship she endured, Truth never believed the answer to developing racial harmony was to kill a man. Sojourner was illiterate, never showed an interest in learning to read or write but understood the Gospel by living it. Her broken English may at times caused people to “jeer” and mock her, but when she rose to speak “Ain’t I a woman,” Truth was so “matter-of-fact” when she spoke. Born into slavery, Sojourner never held a grudge against the slave holder who made her life a misery, instead of cursing him, she acknowledged, “God will take care of the Negro, but what will he do with the slaveholder?”³⁹ Issues and factions split, cuts and wounds have been allowed to weaken the very place anointed to be a “refuge” in the storms of life

³⁹ Carleton Mabey and Susan Mabey Newhouse, *Sojourner Truth: Slave, Prophet, Legend*, <https://archive.org/details/sojournertruths100mabe#maincontent>.

(Psalm 46). It only makes sense to go back and look for the breaches along the way for restoration and healing. We have a great crowd of witnesses (Acts 1:1).

McNeil and Richardson, “God called the disciples to be witnesses of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth, but their ethnocentrism was one of the main barriers to the spread of the gospel beyond the Jewish people. At Pentecost, God intervened and did something amazing. He allowed people to hear the gospel in their mother tongue! The diversity of languages suggests something about the diversity of God’s movement in the earth.”⁴⁰

The women preachers who took time to study the work of these women will be encouraged and refueled as they travel down the “rocky” roads and “climb the rough-jagged mountains with them. Sojourner Truth, a slave mother, once said, “I felt so tall as if the power of a nation was in me.” Mother of some six children, when the moment came for her to walk away from slavery, she did so, leaving everything behind; husband, children, and all semblance of that plantation. Truth may have been physically strong, but when her youngest was sold into slavery after the Emancipation Proclamation had passed, it caused her to walk away from her slaveholder in search of her boy.

Spiritual Health-Wellbeing

Preachers need to be more aware of PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder), “which is a mental health disorder that is triggered by a terrifying event either experiencing it or witnessing it. Unfortunately, the symptoms that Truth experienced

⁴⁰ Brenda Salter McNeil and Rick Richardson, *The Heart of Racial Justice, How Soul Change Leads to Social Change* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 37-38.

were never evaluated for mental and emotional help over the full life. PTSD includes flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.”⁴¹

Truth bore scars from whippings, and Lee wore scars of mental health. Yet, in each of these humble stories, the reader can draw from their holy boldness and strength. Jarena Lee went without medical help and just died. There is no record of the cause of death. On the other hand, Sojourner Truth was a “tower of strength.” She matched her strength against men and, in most cases and won. Yet, leaving her children and husband behind, without going back, seemed heartless. Sojourner recognized that she had tried to force her family to go with her, but none would have survived.

Today, more than seven in ten U. S. Christian women (72 percent) say religion is “essential” in their lives, compared with 62 percent of the country’s Christian men, according to the Pew Research Center’s 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study.⁴² In addition, women from abusive relationships have found the church to be “a refuge” and strong tower (Psalm 46:1).

Jarena Lee found the church fit her circumstances; she began preaching on the circuit, leaving behind her children. It would seem that the call to preach was her release and relief. Both Truth and Lee had “issues.” Serving in the church became therapeutic and brought a sense of satisfaction that each thrived on.

⁴¹ Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, <https://www.bing.com/search?q=post%20traumatic%20stress%20disorder&pc=cosp&ptag=G6C7N1234D050120A98C4AF66BD&form=CONBDF&conlogo=CT3210127>.

⁴² U. Religious Landscape Study, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/06/christian-women-in-the-u-s-are-more-religious-than-their-male-counterparts/>.

Spiritual Health-Wellbeing

Bishop Allen saw a gift in Jarena (1783-1864). Lee attended Mother Bethel for approximately eight years before he affirmed her call. “Christianity Today” reported, “On Sunday, 1817, Jarena Lee participated in a service at Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, a former servant. Lee had become a Christian nearly a decade before a conversion experience, waking her to preach.

“During the exhortation, God made manifest his power in a manner sufficient to show the world that I was called to labor according to my ability and the grace is given unto me in the vineyard of the god husbandman.”⁴³ As a Trail Blazing African American Preacher and self-made” woman, Lee worked as a domestic servant, Bishop Allen saw her gifts, but the writer is sure, he saw her distress. Mental and physical health is a “gift.” It is a gift to have good health in every situation, whether or not the preacher has an infirmity or not, ministry can be done from a wheelchair, but mental disorders will come to the surface, rendering the preacher with all the best intentions; too sick to have anyone because of being incapable of helping herself.

Truth was illiterate. When she traveled to preach, she depended solely on her instincts. Her autobiography was dictated. Losing her son, Peter, the child born into freedom, was a battle like no other. Without the ability to neither read nor write, she found favor in many Quaker families who offered their support. Yet, there was something about Truth that overpowered her adversaries. She carried herself with such pride and dignity, despite her ignorance, like Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:9). “There was a fire all shut

⁴³ Eric Washington, *Trail Blazing African American Preacher*, Christianity Today.com/history/people/pastors and preachers/Jarena Lee.

up in her bones” (Jeremiah 20:9), and nothing got in the way of her delivering God’s word.

With ministry comes turbulence and hardship. Lee preached for more than twenty years until illness slowed her, dying in 1849 shortly after publishing the third revision of her autobiography, first written sixteen years earlier.⁴⁴ This woman had mental “issues,” and God found need of her despite her mental state. Sadly, Jarena’s time to preach was short-lived. She suffered some strange disorder and died at the height of her vocation. Ministry is very demanding, which will be discussed further under the area of self-care, a time set aside regularly to celebrate you, with a “Sabbath rest.”

There is a tremendous work started by the she-roes of the late seventeenth through the early nineteen hundreds. Who said that a woman’s work is in the home? And who said that a woman’s only role is making babies and homemaking? Eunjoo Mary Kim, *Women Preaching*, added a point of view to how women have had to carve out their own way to the Pulpit.⁴⁵

“Although women contributed significantly to the preaching ministry of the early church, soon thereafter, they were officially excluded from the pulpit when the Christian Church was institutionalized based on a patriarchal structure. Powerful women of the Spirit have, however, continued to exercise their spiritual leadership through preaching in spite of the oppression and persecution by misogynist church leaders and the patriarchal systems of the church.”⁴⁶ Despite what the patriarchal system dictated, contemporary

⁴⁴ Eric Washington, *Trail blazing African American Preacher and “self-made” woman*, *Christianity Today.com/history/people/pastorsandpreachers/jarenalee*.

⁴⁵ Eunjoo Mary Kim, *Women Preaching* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2004), 1.

⁴⁶ Eunjoo Mary Kim, *Women Preaching* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2004), 1.

Protestant preaching in the United States, however, is facing a new situation. The Christian pulpit is not relatively egalitarian, and it is no longer privileged space for male clergy only.”⁴⁷

In the following pages of this report, the women who grace the pages of time were not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet, some did come “kicking and screaming” like Jeremiah, until one day they admitted, “I will not mention his word or speak any more in his name, His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones (Jeremiah 20:9).” The spirit of these great preachers has not gone ignored; no, they are a memorial to the amazing work done to spread the word near and far. They each did something that women typically were not allowed to do. What a disservice it would be if the memory of preachers such as Jarena Lee, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Tubman would be erased from our history.

“It was clear after Sojourner was freed in both Ulster County and New York City, she surrounded herself with people who could open the way for her to pursue an education. Quakers, Methodist's benevolent whites, activists, blacks—she recalled afterward; in New York City, she was despised because of her ignorance. ⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Truth was determined to go among the white people and learn all she could.”

Freedom's Prophet, Richard Allen, was convinced when Jarena Lee spoke that she had the “Holy Ghost!”⁴⁹ The prophets are there to teach us to do the work of the Lord and to not “get weary in doing virtuous deeds (Galatians 6:9)” as we remember the real

⁴⁷ Eunjoo Mary Kim, *Women Preaching* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2004), 2.

⁴⁸ Carleton Mabee, *Sojourner Truth, Slave, Prophet, Legend* (New York, NY: New York University, 1914), 54, <https://archive.org/details/sojournertruths/00mabe#maincontent>.

⁴⁹ Eric Washington. Christianity Today.com/history/people/pastorsandpreacher/jarenalee.

reason behind the commandment, “Go ye therefore and preach the gospel to all nations, and lo I will be with you, even until the end of time (Matthew 28:18-19).”

It was a tumultuous time for women. Jarena Lee proved to have the zeal and passion for going where few women dared to go. The landscape was not only rough but unkind and fearsome for a woman to risk not only traveling alone, but this was an oppressive time, yet she travailed. Though many of these great daughters of thunder were tenacious and bold, their ministries were not without “issues.” Jarena Lee fought a strange malady. Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman escaped from slavery, but neither came out unscathed. Emotionally, all three women fought internal and external battles. All three women would be candidates of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome).

Chanequa Walker Barnes’ story, *Too Heavy a Yoke*, addresses the emotional burdens Black women face in a world of racism and oppression. “The Strong Black Woman is a legendary figure typified by extraordinary capacities for caregiving and for suffering without complaint. Unfortunately, it is a cultural myth.”⁵⁰ Walker-Barnes, in an interview, talks about African American Women (AAW) who put on a mask to cover up the PTSD (deep emotional pain) they inherited from generational lack. This generational lack is systemic. “Hopelessness-when people think that their life could not get any better, they tend to lose motivation which eventually leads them to believe they are hopeless.”⁵¹ It comes with a struggle to provide shelter for their family, find affordable housing, get healthcare, a battle to get an education, and the battle after attaining an education to find

⁵⁰Chanequa Walker-Barnes, *Too Heavy A Yoke* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 3.

⁵¹ Philippe Matthews, *The Detriment of Generational Poverty*, www.howmovement.org/the-detriment-of-generational-poverty/ January 18, 2014.

employment for that skill set. The struggle may continue as an AAW to be paid fairly, proportional to their particular skill set.

M. Jan Holton, *Longing for Home*, frames our shared ways of making meaning, creates in us a sense of belonging and names the places that are safe and teaches us to create relationships.”⁵² For so many around the globe, home means more than the platitude, where the heart is, but home is deeply connected to the sacred. Holton suggests, “Home at its best can invite us to lean closer into glimpses of God.”⁵³

The relationship between the pastor and the parishioner is “sacred.” “Emmanuel Y. Lartey offers *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural* world using three principles:

Contextuality, multiple perspectives, and authentic participation. Context is highly significant for its influence upon behavior, as such behaviors and beliefs need to be understood and analyzed within their context, and lastly, facing the reality that others from other contexts might disagree strongly with other affirmations arising out of different contexts.⁵⁴

At this report, the nation is suffering from thousands of people sick and dying from the Coronavirus. The WHO (World Health Organization) ⁵⁵ asked everyone around the world to practice “social distancing.” How does this affect families emotionally? The minister’s role has been in limbo. “Panic” must be replaced with God’s faithful assurance, “that this too, shall pass (John 14:1-4).”

⁵² M. Jan Holton, *Longing for Home* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 35.

⁵³ M. Jan Holton, *Longing for Home* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 35.

⁵⁴ Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 11.

⁵⁵ WorldHealthOrganization, <https://www.bing.com/search?q=who&pc=cosp&ptag=G6C1N1234D050120A98C4AF66BD&form=CONBDF&conlogo=CT3210127>.

Processing grief during a Pandemic:

When nothing is normal, mourning has become a whole new kind of challenge. As a culture, people are not very adaptable to handling grief. This article in Rolling Stones, we want people to mourn for a short period of time and then return to their lives as if nothing happened. We have a set agenda for mourning: plan the service, hold the funeral, memorial, or Shiva, eat plenty of deli platters and casseroles, then get yourself back together and press on.⁵⁶

In addition to the above, there is “Evidence of black-on-black violence, crime, Xeno-phobia, Afrophobia and dishonesty as direct opposites of how black people behave towards their white colonial masters are enshrined amongst African people (Ashimolowo 2007:176). The attitude of black self-hatred is impeding our decolonization.”⁵⁷

Around 1968-1970, working young mothers relied on a family support system. With the pandemic of Coronavirus, the Washington Post highlighted a story where millions of grandparents are at risk for Covid-19 while caring for their grandchildren. During this pandemic, these grandparents are making dire sacrifices to help adult children who must work.⁵⁸

The female pastor knows this hardship first-hand. More mothers would increase their earnings and seek new job opportunities if they had greater access to reliable and affordable childcare. During this unstable time, all agencies, including the churches, were forced to close. Children and teenagers are not parents.

⁵⁶ Rolling Stones, <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/coronavirus-grief-pandemic-emotional-fatigue-981847/>.

⁵⁷ M. E. Baloyi, *Black self-hatred: Regaining self-worth-from decolonization towards reconciliation in South Africa*, A practical theological appraisal, *Theologia Viatorum* Vol. 44, no. 1 (a33), <https://doi.org/10.4102/TV.v44i1.33>.

⁵⁸ “Washington Post story on grandchildren, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/millions-of-us-grandparents-care-for-young-kids--and-are-high-risk-for-the-coronavirus>.

Walker-Barnes had no such resource available for her and her younger brother. Barnes was responsible for the care of her little brother. The two would wake up each morning, and Barnes would see that the little brother was bathed and had breakfast. Barnes took him to school on the bus and then had to catch a bus to her school. At the end of each weekday, the children spent a lot of time on their own, leaving their emotional health at stake. This system was known as “latchkey kids”⁵⁹ (a child returns from school to an empty home). The effects of being a “latchkey” child differ with age. Loneliness, boredom, and fear are most common for those younger than ten years of age.

Young parents are somewhat careless. The number of cases reported of children accidentally being shot is growing. The Chicago Times reported at least three children were shot accidentally.⁶⁰ Walker-Barnes, “In academic, ministry, and personal contexts, the question that the researcher has been asked after discussing the problems with the ideology of the Strong Black Woman is, what is the alternative? Women who struggle with the burden of being a Strong Black Woman want to know what model of femininity ought to replace it; (Oprah Winfrey and Michelle Obama) are often suggested as champions for a new image of African American Women.”⁶¹

This subject on ministering to women is critically needed. Women know women. Women in pastoral are embodied with a gift of “mother-wit.” It is this prophetic gift that

⁵⁹ Latch Key Kids. www.latchkey-kids.com.

⁶⁰ Chicago Times Crime, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/crime/2020/2/15/21138724/chicago-weekend-shootings-gun-violence-children-wounded-feb-14-17-parkway-gardens>.

⁶¹ Chanequa Walker-Barnes, *Too Heavy A Yoke*, Black Women, and the Burden of Strength (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 170.

is needed to allow the female pastor to introduce these women to Jesus' "living water, where they will never thirst again (John 4:1-26)."

Reproduction

Promiscuity is at the root in the periscope of the Samaritan woman at the well: The root problem of AIDS, an important characteristic of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa, is that heterosexual contact is identified as the primary transmission mode. This disease is running rampant in Africa (Figure 1).⁶² African women, of the Islamic faith, bound by their marriage vows, are the victims (husbands in polygamous relationships) and the targets.

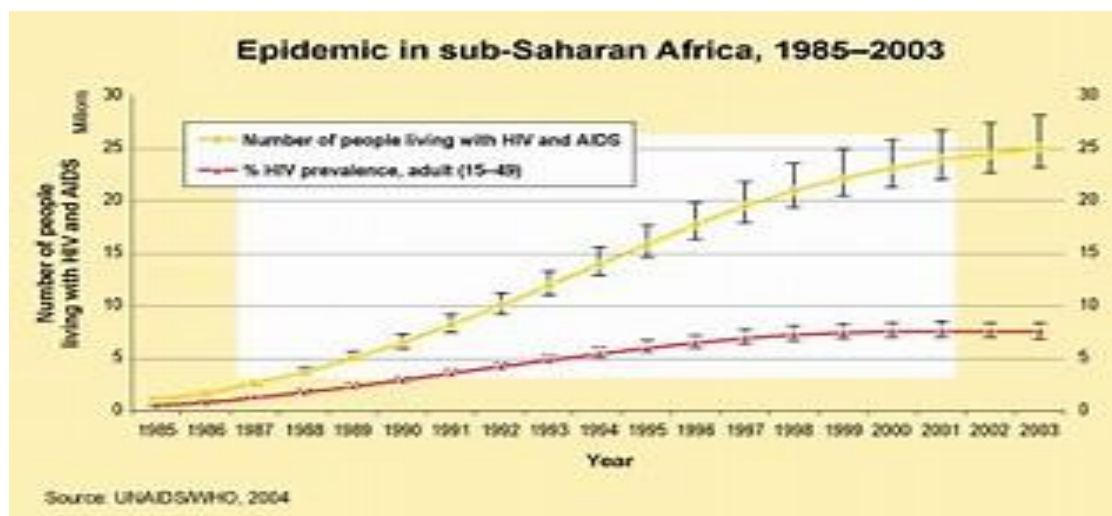


Figure 1. Epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa, 1985-2003.

⁶² AIDS/HIV Epidemic, <https://www.bing.com/search?q=pandemic%20in%20sub-saharan%20africa%20hiv%20and%20aids&pc=cosp&ptag=G6C7N1234D050120A98C4AF66BD&form=CONBDF&conlogo=CT3210127>.

Yadah Yadah Prayer Group, Inc.⁶³ (Christian women from around Pittsburgh, PA) sponsored a women's retreat in September 2006 at the Westin William Penn. The subject dealt with AIDS. The Pittsburgh AIDS Taskforce was invited⁶⁴, and the University of Pittsburgh's Center for AIDS elimination⁶⁵ to provide education and testing. The guest speakers, a preacher from Chicago and the author of the *Yadah Yadah Prayer Books*, Neta Jackson⁶⁶ and her colleague, Pam, delivered a message on women with "issues." The message, "The body is a temple, sanctified and holy; it is a mandate from God to live Holy, as He is Holy (1 Peter 1:13-16)."

As Walker-Barnes wrote, we never know what pain or burdens a person carries, but what we now know exists. "Just as sexual violence is prevalent in ancient sacred texts; sexual violence is prevalent in contemporary society. If the statistics are right that about one in seven women has been sexually violated, those of us who are academia is more than likely teaching students who have directly experienced sexual violence."⁶⁷

Brenda Salter McNeil and Rick Richardson, *The Heart of Racial Justice*, applied the Acts 2 passage as they talked about racial harmony:

On the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit, God's invisible, powerful presence, came to empower the disciples to fulfill his global cultural mandate. They had been called to be witnesses of Jesus Christ "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), but their ethnocentrism was one of the main barriers to the spread of

⁶³ Neta Jackson, Yadah Yadah Prayer Group, Inc. (2006), https://www.goodreads.com/author/list/6976.Neta_Jackson.

⁶⁴ Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force, <https://www.mapquest.com/us/pennsylvania/pittsburgh-aids-task-force-370283406>.

⁶⁵ ID/AIDS Elimination Department, <https://dom.pitt.edu/id/centers-institutes/idhivresearch>.

⁶⁶ Neta Jackson, *Yadah. Yadah Prayer Books*, https://www.goodreads.com/author/list/6976.Neta_Jackson.

⁶⁷ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Sexual Violence and Sacred Texts*, www.fsrinc.org/book/sexual-violence-and-sacred-texts/.

the gospel beyond the Jewish people. Then God intervenes and does something absolutely amazing, and He allows people to hear the gospel in their native language.⁶⁸

The sacred and the divine:

Today, right here in the US, babies are for sale. Jennifer Lahl, a columnist, wrote an article for the University of Mary, “The New York State Legislature has legalized commercial gestational surrogacy-the contractual renting of wombs and the buying and selling of newborn babies. In a case with Brittney Rose Torres and Melissa Cook, who each carried triplets, they were told to abort two of the three children and faced threats and financial ruin for refusing to do so.”⁶⁹

Wesley wrote, “Thou shalt not do anything hurtful to the health, or life of thy own body, or any others.”⁷⁰ “The world cannot stand still. Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past or present will certainly miss the future.”⁷¹ If a woman’s body is sick, who will lead her to Jesus so she may hear, “Daughter go in peace, your faith has made you well (Mark 5:34).”

Christo Thesnaar commented:

Pastoral care within a hermeneutical paradigm also has to do with a theology of life and the healing of life. It is about dwelling in the presence of the pathos of the suffering Christ. It is about hope and the ever-existing predicament of trauma, illness, and sickness.⁷²

Self-Locating: Touchstone for Preaching: “Naming where one came from or where one stands is important. Self-locating helps Scholars of

⁶⁸ Brenda Salter McNeil and Rick Richardson, *The Heart of Racial Justice*, How Soul Change Leads to Social Change (Downers Grove, ID: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 37.

⁶⁹ First things first 2020, <https://www.firstthings.com>.

⁷⁰ John Wesley, Wesley Notes, Exodus 20:13, <https://staffordsgreenhouse.blogspot.com/2011/10>.

⁷¹ John F. Kennedy, www.brainyquote.com/quotes/john_f_kennedy_135392.

⁷² Christo Thesnaar, *A Theological-Hermeneutical Analysis of Violence from the Perspectives of Both Perpetrators and victims* Practical Theology, Stellenbosch University, Scriptural 106 (2011): 29.

homiletics claim a perspective and outline the scope of interests while also identifying the limits of their research.”⁷³

From Holbrook’s *Injustice and the care of souls*: “To connect with those outside our own immediate circle, we need to know and own our familial home, cultural home, economic home, and our faith home. To work for change, we need to know where we stand. And where many stand is in the landscape of privilege; without being able to name this reality and identify its consequences we cannot know home.”⁷⁴

The Penn West District Conference Minister, Rev. D. A., made this humble statement: “We, as the people of God, invite all to join us in mercy, love, and humility. Join us in prayer, meditation, and action. It is time for justice and repentance and time for the work of equality. Any other response is inexcusable.”⁷⁵

In closing

This world lost a great man, the Rev. Dr. Charles E. Booth. Booth felt women, “Daughters” would prophesy and bring a sense of authenticity to the ministry. In a volume of his work, *Living Under an Imposed Sentence*, La Trice M. Washington wrote Booth is concerned about one thing, preaching God’s worth authentically.⁷⁶

Historically, the church is led by (patriarchal) a man. With the church in decline

⁷³ HyeRan Kim-Cragg, *Unfinished and Unfolding Tasks of Preaching*: Interdisciplinary, Intercultural, and Interreligious Approaches in the Postcolonial Context of Migration (Toronto, Canada: Timothy Eaton Memorial Church Associate Prof. in Preaching, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, Homiletic Vol. 44, No. 2 (2019), 4.

⁷⁴ Kujawa-Holbrook and Karen B. Montagno, *Injustice and the Care of Souls*, Taking Oppression Seriously in Pastoral Care (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 37.

⁷⁵ Rev. David Ackerman, Conference Minister, Penn West Association of the United Church of Christ, www.pennwest.org/Association%20Meeting%202019.pdf.

⁷⁶ Dr. Charles E. Booth, *Living Under an Imposed Sentence* (Chicago, IL: MMGI Books, 2014), 75.

and so many mainline denominations fighting against female pastors, perhaps it would be best those women muster up the energy and courage to do a church plant. I wonder what Dr. Booth would say this. In Stephen C. Compton's *Rekindling the Mainline: New Life/ through New Churches*, he suggested this just may be a significant contributing factor in membership loss.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

This theological paper celebrates women and their perspective views of who God is in their lives. Early in this course of study, the pericope (Mark 5:25-42) was selected to support the lack of inclusion of women in the role of pastors for ordination. The Markan text is being applied to the question; is it realistic to seek harmony and understanding in congregations without further dividing and splintering the body of Christ?

The academy of scholars used for this paper has brought new insights and understanding to approach this subject on developing harmony in congregations. The contributors are scholars across denominational lines and religious cultures. While they offer their opinions on how God has heard their cries, they bring to the table their points of view on theology that speaks to them in their individual walk with God.

The subject of development had a story that began with betrayal and survival. Yet even with all the sordid events that occurred along the road from the Congo across the Atlantic to the Americas, the people of Africa were not without their understanding of who God is.

One of the strengths that came out of studying all four theological fields is that each found strength in tracing their roots back to their “fearless” ancestors. One thing that rings true about all of the disciplines chosen is that they all agree on one strategy. You are best heard in a small group.

Using the pericope of Mark 5:25-34 is the poignant story of an unnamed woman and her miraculous healing. This pericope caught my attention as it tells of a woman's struggle. As the writer began to concentrate on the passage, the writer's thoughts were interrupted by the number of women struggling with similar issues of lack; lack of help as they deal with issues of mental and physical health, disadvantages heaped on them by the lack of social justice, discrimination, poverty, employment, sexual harassment, incest, and spousal abuse.

In doing the biblical research for this paper, St. Mark draws the reader's attention to see how people with issues, that is, physical, emotional, and mental, were harshly treated and discriminated against. Looking back over centuries, this study takes into consideration the number of issues the ancient church experienced that plague today's church. There remains a cloud hanging over issues of women in leadership, particularly women who desire to serve in the role of an ordained pastor.

Mark's Gospel is a poignant story of the people who lived on the fringes and went beyond the cultural practices of their people to seek Jesus' help allowing their faith alone to guide them. To those who sought out Jesus, they were rewarded to find that he acted "immediately." The scriptures show Jesus as not just a change maker, or an advocate for social justice or a healer, but the Messiah, the one to whom all people of faith turned to Salvation (John 8:7).

This paper must ask many questions: Why were women always kept in the background? And why was the woman in the selected pericope not named? The Markan text challenges the reader to go further to get the answers from the past and how the age-old culture lived through their doctrines as commanded by the Torah. Both sacred and

secular practices intersect with the Markan pericope. In order to understand the fullness of the passage chosen, it is suggested that the reader begins with the opening passage.

Jesus sends off the demoniac with the overall theme, go tell your family of how the Lord has been good to you. In Mark, Chapter 5:1, the Markan “sandwich” is best understood as it separates and slips into its middle, the drama of the woman with “an issue” of blood.

Four areas of theology undergird this paper on Developing Harmony and Understanding in Congregations to address the Denial of Women for Pastoral Leadership.

1. African American Theology
2. Black Liberation Theology
3. Feminist Theology
4. Womanist Theology

African American Theology

African American Theology, Anthony B. Pinn and Katie G. Cannon respond:

“African American Theology is an academically informed enterprise that began in the late 1900s through the efforts of African American scholars and progressive pastors that shaped the religious nature and meaning of social transformation in the years after major successes of the civil rights movement. Ministers and academics took a public stand against injustice and demanded a re-envisioning of life in the United States that took the humanity of African-Americans seriously, and they found no contradiction between this demand for material advancement and the demands of the Gospel of Christ.”¹

Pinn and Cannon expressed, “African American Theology revolved around epistemologies, ontologies, and so on. Each was meant to speak theologically to the lived experience of African Americans. It meant to alter the prevailing theological anthropology that positioned African Americans as ‘less than...’ In order to do this, African American Theology drew from past conversations (for example, civil rights theology) to represent African Americans. Whiteness became the grand narrative of oppression that had to be exposed and dismantled, and it was argued scripture, the true Christian tradition, and the cultural worlds of African Americans provided the tools for doing so.”²

In a compilation of great works is Benjamin E. May’s “*The Negro’s God*,” an important book on the history of American thought. “It is characterized by a fertile use of the sociological approach to the history of thought, by realistic regard for the experiences of the masses so often ignored in such histories, and by objectivity in treating movements in which the author himself shares.”³

From this new movement came “First-generation thinkers: James Cone, J. Deotis Roberts, Major Jones, ethicist such as Peter Paris and Preston Williams; historians like Gayraud Wilmore; philosophers such as William Jones; as well as ministers such as

¹ Anthony B. Pinn and Katie G. Cannon, *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology, Religion, Theology, and Philosophy of Religion Online Publication Date: Aug 2014*, <https://www-oxfordhandbooks-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199755653.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199755653-e-035?print>.

² Anthony B. Pinn and Katie G. Cannon, *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press), 1.

³ Benjamin E. Mays, *The Negroes God*, *The Journal of Negro Education*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2292588>.

Albert Cleage-black theology grew to include at least two, depending on how one counts, additional generations of scholars and ministers committed to the basic framework of a theologized social agenda.”⁴

If one desired a fuller understanding of African American theology, James Baldwin, an avid student of African American theology, demonstrated this in a scene in his novel *If Beale Street Could Talk*. “Here, a black Christian woman can only make love to her husband by psychologically substituting God for her husband. Thus, the woman’s pillow talk is also her god-talk, from which the husband is excluded. Postbellum black writers were trying to present the black woman’s mothering and nurturing roles in relation to the transformative social processes occurring in the black community after the Civil War.”⁵

The Journal of Negro Education reviewed the work of Will Thomas on the subject of *God is for White Folks*. It appears that Thomas leans arrogantly toward the notion of light complexion Black people who sought refuge in a White world after fleeing from the Deep South. Thomas draws on a susceptible subject with an old theme, blacks passing as white. The reviewer of this book written over seventy-five years ago remarks, “Once again an angry, protesting book wedges itself a place on that ever-growing bookshelf of American novels that point irritably at the stupidity of racial tolerance.”⁶ Oddly enough, fifty years or more signals a change in the ways and thinking of a time which

⁴ Benjamin Mays, *The Negroes God*, 2.

⁵ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, EBSCO Publishing: eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) printed on 9/28/2020.

⁶ Elizabeth W. Reeve, *God is for White Folks*, Journal of Negro Education, <https://doi-org.dtl/idm.oclc.org/10.2307/2966062>.

undoubtedly brought harsh reactions and germane to that period in history. The main topic is how black people interpreted this man's "cover-up" and escaped to the North for refuge.

There is no accurate number of those who escaped to freedom. Yet, history applauds the work of the great woman emancipator, Harriet Tubman, for her courageous work in leading hundreds or perhaps thousands across the Deep South to a place of refuge and safety. The Black story is an extraordinarily complex one. Many ran away and did ungodly things for safety at the risk of being killed or made to do inhuman things. It was not uncommon for someone to be forced to live a "double life."

That is the story of the great emancipator, the woman known as the Black Moses, Harriet Tubman. Tubman had a prophetic call on her life. There is evidence that Tubman made more than seventy trips back and forth to the South using her mysterious "underground" railroad to assist African Americans, regardless of color hew, to places of shelter and safety.

Black Liberation Theology

Furthering the work of Black Liberation Theology, the Rev. Dr. James Cone is found at the top of the list. Dr. Cone, a pioneer in Black Liberation Theology, leaves behind a plethora of material based on his career and individual experiences as an educator and theologian. Dr. Cone was a libertine.

Cone was a Black man of strong conviction and principles who gave voice to black liberation theology in the academy where he taught. Cone pointed the way and gave hands and legs purpose to the issues of the oppressed, the Black man, woman, and

child whose very lives of bravery and martyrdom must be recognized and honored.

Cone's prolific works on Black Liberation are founded on the four hundred years the country of America exploited and murdered millions of black lives even though the early settlers claimed to be Christians. Cone reminds the reader that despite the writing of the Emancipation Proclamation drawn up by President Abraham Lincoln, drafting it into law on January 1, 1863, the Black man is still not free.

In an interview taped at Union Seminary, New York City, 2016, Cone brought full circle what he defines as Black Liberation Theology. Cone, a celebrated professor of Union Theological Seminary in New York City for more than forty years, gave an astounding presentation covering his passion for telling the Black story. Cone recognized that no seminary told the Black story made the connection with Jesus of Nazareth as the Black people's liberator. Cone spoke of racism and the White man's struggle to make the connection between Jesus Christ's ministry and the suffering that was inflicted on Black people while at the same time calling themselves Christian.

Cone stated that suffering contradicts faith. Cone's, *the Lynching Tree*, is his prayer book. In this remarkable presentation, Cone expressed that Black Theology comes from slaves and maids. Cone pointedly said White theology is not Christian Theology. America is like the Rome of antiquity, dominantly white. In this presentation, Cone made the comparison that for him, Jesus is Black, and God is Black. To understand, Cone remarked, "The Christian must have an imagination. Without an imagination, people

should not talk about God. You cannot imagine how good it feels to speak theology the way the writer feels.”⁷

“Defining Black Theology as a theology of liberation” is a well-documented and insightful text, introducing *Black Theology: 3 crucial questions for the Evangelical Church* by Bruce L. Fields.⁸ In the introduction, Fields commented, “Black Theology was developed in response to widespread racism and bigotry in the Christian Church and sought to understand the social and historical experience of African Americans in light of their Christian confession.”

Included in the research on Black Theology are *African American History and African American Theology*. “The history of African Americans is important in the formation of but presents a challenge to, Black Theology. African American history provided a lens through which to view the world and Christian theology. James H. Cone, the progenitor of academic Black Theology, imitated the formal discourse of Black Theology and argued that the exigencies of the moment required a theology of liberation that could speak to conditions currently facing African Americans.”⁹

The *Quest for Liberation and Reconciliation*-essays in honor of J. Deontis Roberts is a collection of essays edited by Michael Battle. “Roberts challenged Black

⁷ James H. Cone, Interview at Union Theological Seminary, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_Q7681TVabU&feature=emb_logostreamedfeb25.

⁸ Bruce L. Fields, *Introducing Black Theology: 3 Crucial questions for the Evangelical Church*, <https://utsdayton.on.worldcat.org/search?queryString=au%3DFields%2CBruceL&databaseList=897,638,283>.

⁹ Stephen C. Finley, *African American History and African American Theology*, <https://www-oxfordhandbooks-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199755653.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199755653-e-001?rkey=6AjmV>.

theology to move beyond bifurcation to a reconstructive discourse in which a diversity of people could seek God in common.”¹⁰

J. Deontis Roberts’ foreword written by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, “In many ways, Saint Paul’s words to the Corinthian people are fitting to begin this volume in honor of Roberts (b. 1927) who turned seventy-eight in July 2005. To reflect on his life and witness him make us ask the question: what is it that keeps us hoping against hope? And what is it that keeps us going, even when we see our hope crushed? Especially in the African American community, we have often seen our hopes dashed. What keeps us reaching for the things we do not have? Roberts provides the answer in that the promises and ideals of the Christian faith inspire us to keep “questing.” We are promised that though we are afflicted, we will not be crushed; though we are persecuted, we will not be forsaken; though so many of us have been struck down, we will not be destroyed. Christian hope will never die. Reconciliation can take place only between equals. It cannot co-exist with a situation of White over Blacks. Therefore, “the goal of our faith quest, genuine reconciliation with both God and our neighbor, can come only if there is the commitment to see all people as created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) an infinite value to God (1Corinthians 6:20; Peter 1:18).”¹¹

Roberts was emphatic as he stood by his desire to see God’s people as one: “Faith in the quest of understanding must include an emphasis on reconciliation among all persons, without African beginnings retraced by Gayraud J. Wilmore in *Black Religion*

¹⁰ Michael Battle, *The Quest for Liberation and Reconciliation, Essays in honor of J. Deontis Roberts* (Louisville: KY, Westminster, 2005), Foreword, Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

¹¹ Michael Battle, *The Quest for Liberation and Reconciliation*, vii.

and Black Radicalism, is an interpretation of the religious history of African Americans.”¹² As African Americans offer their individual interpretations, they do so with the zeal and passion of their ancestry founded in the continent of Africa. So much has been said of the African American’s Christian roots dated in settlement of the Americas, yet here in this compilation of Wilmore’s is the history of the African American’s Christianity. Wilmore’s extensive historical facts regarding Christianity and its roots add to the miseducation and lack of knowledge so many African Americans (particularly the Black elite/educated) who are misguided and ignorant of their own culture.

On the subject of Black radicalism, Wilmore remarked, “We do know that many of the underground preachers to the slaves were not white men, but African priest who possessed tremendous gifts in leadership and persuasion.”¹³ Furthermore, Wilmore stated, “It is in my opinion that what we call *The Movement* is by no means played out today. It is my opinion, Gilmore stated, some persons are still searching for historical foundations within the heritage of Black religion to undergird the continuing struggle for justice and liberation.”¹⁴

¹² Gayraud J. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism, An Interpretation of the Religious history of African Americans* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 8.

¹³ Gayraud J. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism, An Interpretation of the Religious history of African Americans*, 8.

¹⁴ Gayraud, J. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism, An Interpretation of the Religious history of African Americans*, 8.

Feminist Theology

Under the discipline of Feminist Theology, it is a theology rooted in African American women's faith, experience, and scholarship. It is further defined as: It shares with feminism an interest in how women relate to God, the church, and society, but critiques feminists for being too narrow in their view of who women are and how they relate to the divine.¹⁵

Feminist Theology is a grave contradiction by the white person whose ideals are misconstrued about women and their prominent level of intelligence to go from the mundane work of the household to the high ecumenical role of pastor. What is Feminist Theology, and why do Christian feminists study? The answer is provided in a column by Queergrace.com, which says, “Even though the Biblical beliefs affirm women’s worth, there are also passages of scripture that have been used to limit and harm women. A key task for feminist theology is reconciling belief in divinely ordained gender equality in Biblical passages that seem to portray women as less valuable than men.”¹⁶

“In the Bible, Jesus is recorded to have been respectful of and personally close to women, but Christianity as a religion has had a long history of denying women’s equality. From rules banning women in church leadership to attitudes implying women’s moral inferiority, and even the use of Biblical passages to defend domestic violence, Christianity often treats women as lesser creations. Some injustices against women can

¹⁵ Queergrace.com/feminist-theology/.

¹⁶ Queergrace.com/feminist-theology/.

be traced to the sexist cultural contexts in which Christians have lived, but Christianity itself has too often been used as justification to denigrate women.”¹⁷

To understand the difference between feminist and womanist, Mary Daly offered, “Although some feminist theologians intensify the instinct to discriminate, Reuther and Elizabeth S. Fiorenza are models of self-restraint. Instead of using the oppression of women as the basis for a new ideology, these two realize that the major lesson from their heritage is that no one of any race, gender, social status, or creed should be treated the way women have been.”¹⁸

“Feminist Theology is a movement found in several religions including Sanatan Dharma, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, and New Thought, to reconsider the traditions, practices, scriptures, and theologies of those religions from a feminist perspective. Some of the goals of Feminist Theology include increasing the role of women among the clergy and religious authorities, reinterpreting male-dominated imagery and language about God, determining women’s place in relation to career and motherhood, and studying images of women in the religion’s sacred texts and matriarchal religion.”¹⁹

Feminist theologians believe that it matters who is doing theology. “There is no such thing as thinking about God in a vacuum; in other words, male theologians bring their experience of gender when they talk about God, and so do female theologians.

¹⁷ Queergrace.com/feminist-theology/.

¹⁸ “Feminist Theology,” <https://www.bing.com/search?q=who+are+some+feminist+theologians&cvid=b874b5ac1e8149e2f8d69deb8fecf&pglt=43&FORM=ANSPA1&PC=U>.

¹⁹ “Feminist Theology,” <https://www.bing.com/search?q=who+are+some+feminist+theologians&cvid=b874b5ac1e8149e2f8d69deb8fecf&pglt=43&FORM=ANSPA1&PC=U>.

Likewise, when engaging with religion, it matters what someone's body is like their experience and how they have been included in or excluded from the church. Christian feminists' emphasis on understanding and context leads them to look at Biblical texts, worship services, and even personal devotion from the perspective of who is included and excluded.

The goal is to shape the Christian tradition in ways that value all genders and heal the harm done to women in the name of Christianity. "Feminists are especially alert to traditions and beliefs that exclude or are harmful to women. Still, increasingly they are also paying attention to race, class, gender issues, and the environment, working towards a Christianity that is life-giving to all people."²⁰

Feminist Theology by Natalie K. Watson rethinks "The Christian faith from a woman's perspective. Watson introduces methods, ideas, and contributions of contemporary feminist theology to readers who encounter the subject for the first time. This book on feminist theology also discusses the value of reading Scripture from a feminist perspective. In this way, the neophyte comes to the subject of feminist theology and leaves educated and informed to preach, teach and interpret the Scripture unencumbered by the attitudes of the male-dominated, sexist writers of antiquity. Watson's perspective is ideal for classroom instruction, discussion groups, and even personal study. The volume is considered an exceptional, user-friendly guide to contemporary feminist thought."²¹

²⁰ [Queergrace.com/feminist-theology/](https://queergrace.com/feminist-theology/).

²¹ Natalie K. Watson, *Feminist Theology*, <https://utsdayton.On.worldcat.org/search?databaseList=&queryString=feminist+theology#/oclc/53287608>.

There is a question over society regarding whether feminism changes the worship experience. Most Christians would say that we do not believe God is male, but we often refer to God as “he” and use male images like “king” or “father” when we worship.

While these images can help us understand God’s power and protection, male ways of imagining God can also limit our relationship to and understanding of the divine if they are all we use. Since we, even subconsciously, think of women and men as possessing distinctive character and personality traits, imagining God exclusively as the male can lead us to neglect ways in which God is more stereotypically “feminine,” such as being nurturing, patient or gentle.

Many women relate to God more closely if these feminine aspects are highlighted, and men may find their understanding of God broadened. For example, when worshipping or praying, some feminists use “he” and “she” interchangeably for God; others attempt to sidestep any gender at all and use titles such as “Creator,” “Holy One,” or simply “God.”²²

“It is becoming increasingly popular for feminists to balance male and female images: not just King but also wisdom (personified as female in Proverbs 8), not just a father but also a mother (as seen in Isaiah 66). These expanded ways of describing God can lead to a fuller wonder for who God is in relationship with humanity.”²³

²² Queergrace.com/feminist-theology/.

²³ Queergrace.com/feminist-theology/.

Womanist Theology

In a recent study on womanist theology, women struggle with labels and have remained silent, just as the subject in Mark 5 of the unnamed woman. A well-known theme of the New Testament Gospel of Mark is the utter and complete failure of Jesus' twelve male apostles, even to the bitter end to ever understand either Jesus' mission or his message.²⁴

Beverly R. Wallace writes: "Patricia Hill Collins in her work, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, suggests that justice is doomed to fail if either women or men subordinate and if the interracial analysis is not conducted. Justice is also doomed to fail if black gender ideologies that inform black sexuality are not explored. Furthermore, she writes in (2019) *A Call to Action*, many teachings, and traditions of the church outline these problems and gender injustice and proposes responses as a church in society."²⁵ Women have tolerated being ignored for so long that it is refreshing to read Wallace's study offering a new perspective and not gain more labels; for example: "A woman's place is in the home," or "women should remain silent (1Corinthians 14:34-35, RSV)". These remarks are not only hurtful but say little to the character and nature of a woman who has been the defender of the faith. A mother becomes like a wild bear when a predator seeks to harm her cubs.

The challenge this essay presents to this postmodern world is to recognize the God-given natural abilities of women as they naturally adapt to all the nuances designed

²⁴ "Womanist Theology," <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/th-three-most-important-womn-in-marks-gospl-all-unnamed/>.

²⁵ Beverly R. Wallace, *Silent Voices, Still...But Faith...Lifting Up the Voices of the Daughters of Hagar in 'Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action*. Luther Seminary, Currents in Theology and Mission 47, no. 2 (April 2020).

to hold them back. In a world dominated by men, women have had to work hard to prove that being a homemaker and mother is innate, leaving room to develop any other God-given gifts. Certain men believe women are an enigma. In the creation story, God saw fit to make the woman in His image as man's "helpmeet." This divine role qualifies and quantifies the fantastic story that speaks of the sovereignty and nature of God. God was sorrowful for humankind when he saw how destructive man could be even in the face of God's many blessings.

Womanist Theology considers, "The seriously the intersectionality of race, class, and gender. Alice Walker, a noted author, and womanist defines humanity as an appreciation of all people and takes the sin of the devaluation of humanity seriously. According to a womanist theologian, Delores Williams, to devalue African American womanhood and sexuality is sin."²⁶

Womanist Theology covers a broad Spectrum. In researching Mark's 5:25-34, this subject of rejection, scorn, denial, and discrimination to women has survived over thousands of years. Although much of the blame lies with the victim, many thousands of women remain silent until either they lose all perspective of what "normal" is or do something desperate and harm themselves.

Lisa Villa Prosen, in an article on "Understanding Forgiveness," wrote, "Nothing will ever change while you point the finger of blame. Out of responsibility comes

²⁶ Beverly R. Wallace, Luther Seminary, Assoc. Professor of Congregational and Community Care, *Currents in Theology and Mission* 47, no. 2 (April 2020).

possibility.”²⁷ Remaining silent was the argument women have today with the Apostle Paul's comments on a woman's role in the Church.

Paul makes some blatant and harsh statements, yet the researcher believes he had an epiphany. It would appear that many, many women cast their lots to serve in the newly formed ministry of the Gospels, and it is there in Romans 16:1-2. That Paul introduces Phoebe: “Paul named Phoebe, a notable woman from the Church of Cenchreae, and she was trusted by Paul to deliver his letter to the Romans. Paul refers to her both as a deacon and a helper or patron of many. This is the only place in the New Testament where a woman is specifically referred to with these two distinctions. Paul introduces Phoebe as his emissary to the Church in Rome, and because they are not acquainted with her, Paul provides them with her credentials.”

Faith, Sexism, and Justice, A Womanist Theological read: “Hush No More!” Constructing an African American Lutheran Womanist Ethic” in Transformative Lutheran Theologies: Feminist, Womanist, and Mujerista Perspectives were a preliminary report of the construction of a womanist ethic based on the lived experiences of African American Lutheran women, both lay and clergy. Ten years have passed since it was published. However, still, the need for the voices of African American women expressed through their faith is warranted, especially addressing the ethical mandate to be responsible and to act on gender justice.²⁸

²⁷ Psychology Today, <https://psychologytoday.com/us/blog/your-emotional-meter/22010/understanding-forgiveness>, 10/26/2020.

²⁸ Psychology Today, <https://psychologytoday.com/us/blog/your-emotional-meter/22010/understanding-forgiveness>, 10/26/2020.

The unnamed woman suffered in silence for approximately twelve years in the Markan text used for this paper. No human being should be without healthcare. It is inhuman that women still live in such abominable conditions around the globe. Because of the reality of life in this American context, African American women's experiences and struggles for justice are rooted in faith. This faith has been utilized by African American women for centuries. Faith is a knowing of a God who "makes a way out of no way."²⁹

Using a Womanist Theological framework, Karen Baker-Fletcher is quoted in the chapter, "Hush No More," published in *Transformative Lutheran Theologies*, asking the question:³⁰ If it is proposed that God is a God of freedom and justice, how does one fully participates in God's freeing just activity? A womanist ethic and theology are suggested."

Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women in a ministry project is more beneficial to our congregations, the writer believes, is critically needed today. Preachers see tension, especially when churches worldwide have had to close during this Covid-19 Virus. This spirit of uneasiness is dangerous. Interestingly enough, The United Church of Christ is making every effort to combat the trauma by hosting psychological experts from crisis centers around the area to teach how to help people in our congregations who may be experiencing any signs of danger, that is,

²⁹ Psychology Today, <https://psychologytoday.com/us/blog/your-emotional-meter/22010/understanding-forgiveness>, 10/26/2020.

³⁰ Psychology Today, <https://psychologytoday.com/us/blog/your-emotional-meter/22010/understanding-forgiveness>, 10/26/2020.

displaying symptoms of deep depression where people may do harmful things to themselves or others.

Included in the framework of this chapter are a variety of theological concepts to aid in understanding the societal ills targeted toward the pericope in Mark of the unnamed woman who is desperately seeking Jesus for healing. Out of these passages are a plethora of women's "issues" that emerge. Beginning with the patriarchs, for example, Sari, Abram's wife, introduces the narrative of women owning slaves and the whole discourse of devaluing another person's life. Sari further complicates the matter by insisting that Hagar lies with Abram, which is a highly insensitive matter.

From that insensitive situation by Sari, Isaac's marriage was so much like his father's. He allowed his wife, Rebekah, to usurp authority, causing sibling rivalry between their twin sons. Womanist Theology frowns on scheming women who "usurp" authority and blatantly ignore the commandments of God in their lives, such as Rachel, Rebekah's daughter-in-law and wife of son,

Jacob sets the stage for social injustice and distrust of womanhood. As women of God, sisters who seek equal treatment across denominations and the world, as James Cone once remarked, if women want to be treated with respect, they must move about in the community of faith sharing their gifts and talents to remove the stigma and cloud of disrespect hanging over them by age-old legends and stigmas. Women down through the ages are characterized as either weak, barren, or without dignity or the capacity to live righteous lives. The writer included a few women of the Bible who lived devout lives. In an introduction to Womanist Theology, Mitchem expounds on women who suffer from depression and do unhealthy and unlawful things to receive gratification and affirmation

from their men. This type of emotional drama is played out in situations known as gender entrapment. Yet, there is another way. Hanna, the mother of the prophet and judge, Samuel waited on God. Hannah's Prayer: "Then Hannah prayed and said: My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD, my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God (1 Samuel 2)."

As a point of reference, the Markan text mentioned earlier discusses the theme of brokenness. Throughout the Bible, as far back as Genesis, men spoke little of their women who made tremendous sacrifices or submitted to avoid harsh punitive treatment. Bathsheba and King David is a prime example (2 Samuel 11) or the daughter of Jephthah (Judges 11:36), who he sacrificed in a vow he made if victorious in battle.

Young unwed mothers carry the burden of guilt and shame to such an extent that many have brought dire physical and emotional illness on themselves. The Church joins the world in publicly humiliating and shunning these young mothers rather than earnestly seeking to reduce this problem. Womanist theologians are coming to the front and addressing this worldwide problem offering a holistic approach grounded and rooted in God. The approach is deeply rooted in a faith and hope story grounded in personal experience and intuition. Diana L. Hayes: *Standing in the shoes my mother made: a womanist theology*, "Black women in America have carved out a distinctive and instructive faith stance that is influential well beyond the historic black church."³¹

"Womanist Theology takes on an innovative approach to how God shapes and reshapes

³¹ Diana L. Hayes, *Standing in the shoes my mother made: a womanist theology*, Digital Theological Library, [https://thetdl-on-worldcat.org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/search?databaseList+queryString=ti%3DStanding in the shoes my mother made#/oclc/825768084](https://thetdl-on-worldcat.org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/search?databaseList+queryString=ti%3DStanding+in+the+shoes+my+mother+made#/oclc/825768084).

lives; for that reason, Pamela R. Lightsey, *Our Lives Matter, A Womanist Queer Theology*.³² “Lightsey presents a Womanist Theology by drawing upon her ability to “come out of the darkness into the light.” Lightsey boldly allowed the world to see what the writer preaches, “We are precious in God's sight (John 3:19-21).” Lightsey offered, “Though womanist scholars have been exploring human sexuality for some time, they have not yet produced a full queer theology manuscript committed to the lives of Black lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer women.”³³

Although men have a history of being mistreated, society compounds the issue for women. Lightsey certainly drives home a strong ethic that is worth exploring. The subject for the Church today is to develop harmony. We are at a pivotal time in history as we explore ways to bring harmony and understanding in the face of this pandemic. As people do in these terrible times, maybe God's way of getting us to see each other as God sees us.

Womanist theologian Stephanie V. Mitchem states in her introduction of *Womanist Theology*, “An important aspect of the development of womanist theology is often understated: black women are not primarily focused on addressing the concerns of white theologians. Instead, African American women address the concerns of their lives from their perspectives. This is not insulating but liberating as black women create public venues to explore the realities of their intellectual and spiritual lives. Or what does it

³² Pamela R. Lightsey, *Our Lives Matter: A Womanist Queer Theology*, Wipt and Stock Publishers, 2015, ProQuest Book Created from dtl on 2020-09-28 21:09:45.

³³ Pamela R. Lightsey, *Our Lives Matter: A Womanist Queer Theology*, Wipt and Stock Publishers, 2015, ProQuest Book Created from dtl on 2020-09-28 21:09:45.

mean to be a black woman and claim faith in a saving God?”³⁴ For a woman to take this approach, it is encouraging those who come after her to see room at the Cross. The womanist theologian brings an understanding of God which can do nothing but liberate and further instill a sense of being that for far too long has not existed in the Western world. The Womanist is a woman of faith. This woman must believe that the God she serves is an Omniscient and all-loving God.

When Sojourner Truth preached, “Ain’t I a Woman,” little did she know that she would be speaking for women; African American women. Monica Coleman’s *Ain’t I a Womanist, Too*, “a third wave womanism is a new movement within religious studies with deep roots in the tradition of womanist religious thought-while also departing from it in keyways.”³⁵

Alice Walker’s description of “Womanist” is often invoked as a definition, at most, or as poetic inspiration, at the least, for the religious reflection by and about black women. Alice Walker initially used the term “Womanist” in her 1979 short story, *Coming Apart*. The wife has never considered herself a feminist, though she is, of course, a “Womanist.” A “Womanist” is a feminist, only more common. Under the heading of history of Womanist and Womanism, within religious scholarship, Alice Walker’s description of “Womanist” is often invoked as a definition, at the most, or as poetic inspiration, at the least, for the religious reflection by and about black women.

³⁴ Stephanie V. Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology*, EBSCO Publishing: eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) -printed on 9/28/2020 9:39 PM via CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGYebcohost.com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/ehost/delivery?sid=b0c145ee-769c-490f19df44d7%40sessionmgr4007&vid=1&ReturnUrl=http%3a%.

³⁵ Monica A. Coleman, *Ain’t I a Womanist Too? Third Wave Womanist Religious Thought*, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/25166>.

Conclusion

Although the United States of America, in the writing of its Constitution, stated that all men are free with the inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Those words were not designed for the Black man or his family. Those words were intended for the White, Euromerican who, even at the writing of the Constitution, still believed they had the right to enslave Black human beings to grow their cotton, sugar cane, and tobacco fields.

The contributors of this project awakened and rekindled men and women who stood firmly on a platform to rewrite history where men and women can exercise their God-given rights to believe in a God who knows them by name and to live out a faith that has allowed them to see God through their own lives.

The church has a jaded past with a lot of reconciling to do. The church must be reminded of its role as a “refuge in the storm,” a shelter for the wayward, and God’s source of pride. The writer is reminded that God’s heart is without boundaries, which means the heart of God’s church has the capacity to include the diverse community. The communities of different people, whose lifestyles may be controversial, are nonetheless God’s creation.

As the writer moves closer to the completion of the Doctor of Ministry, the Doctor of the Church is believed this theological chapter with its emphasis on womanist theology will have far-reaching tentacles that will reach deep and hopefully travel across faith lines for understanding in congregations. This project has at its heart a transformative plan to bring God’s people together on one accord. The African American

people have come so far since Rev. Richard Allen,³⁶ who was instrumental in setting the tone. The fact that people like Harriet Tubman, the great emancipator of the eighteenth century, and Gayraud Wilmore of the nineteenth century can be linked together is phenomenal. Betrayal, jealousy, and schemes are not of God. The African Americans willing to take out time to learn who they are will be invaluable for their people today and in the years to come.

In the formatting of this project, the writer chose the pericope of Mark 5:25-42. In researching this chapter, Theological Foundations, The writer has gratefully discovered four disciplines that increase an understanding of where to go from here and shed light on a corner of ministry never questioned: Womanist Theology. Although the four studied, that is, African American Theology, African American

Liberation Theology, Feminist Theology, and Womanist Theology, though each contributed to my final choice, Womanist Theology best addresses a discipline of maturity and life-lived experiences good for the continuing desire to share with the Church who has taken the liberty to go down a never-ending road toward further separatism and discord not of God nor Christianity.

The Markan text is consistent with the work done in the gospel of Luke for social reform and justice to all of God's children, but particularly his women. It is unique and divinely ordained to see how these two pericopes relate. Luke uses Mark, which empowers and increases the understanding of Mark to show Jesus as the Messiah, one to

³⁶ Richard S. Newman. *Freedom's Prophet*, Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2005), 68.

who all turn to for life-healing and sustenance. Mark shows that Jesus does not associate sin with illness. It further shows that Jesus deals with the individual and allows those seeking him to find him in the “openness” of life...not secluded or separated from the people who need him the most.

Jesus does these fascinating things for believers and nonbelievers, saying he is an “equal opportunity” savior. Christians who believe in Jesus as their savior expounds on Him as a peacemaker, the Lord, and the one who ultimately, through faith, gives eternal rest through salvation.

The urgency for the people of God today is not to sacrifice His Church and its congregation in the vain interest of those who under the guise of Christianity do not know the Great Commission and mandate given only to those ordained: “Go therefore and make disciples of all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18) and lo I will be with you even until the end of age (Matthew 28:20).”

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

The focus and intent of this research project of *Developing Harmony in the Church as it Relates to Ordaining Women* are to examine and delve deeper within the field of Womanist Theology. Women theologians across the globe, regardless of their denominational differences, share one thing in common, the desire to be heard. The project uses women who have traveled the same road seeking affirmation and acceptance. As these women across denominations, cultures, and ethnicities tell their own stories of denial, rejection, and lack of inclusion, the researcher found the strength needed to trudge on with the hope that other women coming behind her would not get weary in doing god's work. Theoretically, women have been silenced, shunned, and discriminated against by male chauvinist church leaders who have left them out of the ecumenical process for leadership roles. Women have faced gender discrimination, lack of inclusion, and bias in the Church by the male leadership, who has blocked women in service using vain excuses: 1. Women lack the intelligence to meet the rigid requirements for the role of ordained pastor, 2. Look back to Scripture and interpret a passage from the Apostle Paul, and 3. Take the passage of Scripture entirely out of context.

The Markan periscope, 5:25-37, would have the reader believe that this unknown woman could easily be the girl who has been missing from Sunday worship and fellowship. Perhaps she is the lady you have not seen on the bus these past months or

even the next-door neighbor due to the extreme behavior the world has been thrust into years with over the past two years with Covid-19.

Across denominations, cultures, and ethnicities, women speak the same language of denial, rejection, and betrayal related to the lack of inclusion in the service of the Lord as the Pastor. The unknown woman's story in this periscope is set in antiquity in a particular place and time in biblical history, yet her problem is relevant and stale today. The woman in this text is not just an ordinary woman but one of Jewish descent and possibly one from a well-to-do family. With this knowledge and commonality across womanhood, the researcher sought to find Scholars from the fields of social psychology, theology, liberation, womanist, and Black theology to fend the questions women in ministry continue to wrestle with, lack of acceptance as female pastors.

For this reason, the researcher reflects upon Anthropology as it relates to the thoughts, growth, and development of five trailblazing women of color. Etymologically, anthropology is the discipline that studies human beings. In a theological context, the term usually refers to the manner in which a theologian understands human nature and human destiny.¹ Five Womanist Theologians will be used to inform this paper as this project approaches its final DMin project of *Developing Harmony in the Church as it Relates to Ordaining Women*. Five scholars were instrumental in choosing a womanist theological stance:

1. Alice Walker, the poet and prolific author of *Beloved*
2. Pamela Lightsey

¹ Justo L. González, *Essential theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 8-9.

3. Diana L. Hayes
4. Stephanie Mitchem
5. Monica Coleman

Alice Walker sets the stage to identify with women and their unique individuality. Walker is unique. Walker does not fall within labels. Walker's description of Womanist is often invoked as a definition, at the most, or as poetic inspiration, at the least, for the religious reflection by and about black women. Alice Walker's personality or gifts range from poet to writer.

Walker would be one of the first to say; women just need to be heard. The field of literature and art recognize Walker and her giftedness. The screenplay, *Beloved*, was exceptionally profound. Walker has also been identified as a feminist (a phrase that shelters many different positions, as do the words feminism and theology have taken separately. There are three main types of feminism, the liberal tradition; concerned with equality of civil rights for women and men, access to educational and professional opportunities, reproductive self-determination, and equal pay for comparable work).²

Yet, it is not clear whether anyone field can capture her unique talents to the field of art. When writers speak of Walker, nothing is exact in their portrayal of her. What does come out of the article by Monica Coleman³ is that Walker broke into a field where

² Ann Loades, Editor, *Feminist Theology: A Reader* (Meriden, CN: SPCK W/JKP, 1990), 1.

³ Monica A. Coleman, *Ain't I a Womanist Too?* Third Wave Womanist Religious Thought, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/25166>.

not just African American women appreciated her, but all women regardless of ethnicity and color.

Pamela Lightsey opened the discussion of being a womanist. Lightsey expressed the need to be recognized without discrimination and bias. Lightsey, the author of *Our Lives Matter, A Womanist Queer Theology*,⁴ is a female ordained pastor in the United Methodist Church. Her sexuality in the past would have been a cause for being “defrocked.”

This area of discussion is currently under questioning across the United Methodist Church. Society has always allowed the church to lead in social situations between the secular and the sacred. This struggle is heightened since the government has written into Civil Law same-sex marriages. Lightsey’s voice and Womanist Theology are boldly impacting the discussion of whether a female should be excluded from the sacred position of Ordained Pastor.

Diana L. Hayes, *Standing in the shoes my mother made: a womanist theology*, “Black women in America have carved out a distinctive and instructive faith stance that is influential well beyond the historic black church.”⁵ Hayes, a womanist Catholic theologian, offers a rich biography that includes her mother and the proud shoes she stands in as an ordained preacher and woman of faith:

I stand today in the shoes my mother made, wrapped from head to toe in that

⁴ Pamela R. Lightsey, *Our Lives Matter: A Womanist Queer Theology*, Wipit and Stock Publishers, 2015, ProQuest Book Created from dtl on 2020-09-28 21:09 45.

⁵ Diana L. Hayes, *Standing in the shoes my mother made: A womanist theology*, Digital Theological Library, [https://thedtlonworldcat.org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/search?databaseList+queryString=ti%3DStanding in my shoes my mother made#/oclc/825768084](https://thedtlonworldcat.org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/search?databaseList+queryString=ti%3DStanding+in+my+shoes+my+mother+made#/oclc/825768084).

the wondrous tapestry she created that protects but also encourages me to challenge the status quo and keep movin' on up a little higher. These shoes are strong, firm, and supportive. They have enabled me to stand tall on a foundation of faith, in myself, my family, and my God, and to enter into worlds that historically were off-limits to Black women. I am a Catholic womanist theologian. I do so based on several assumptions—first, that to be a womanist is to be Black, that is of African ancestry. Second that, to name myself Catholic is to call upon 2,000 years of African and African American history, claiming the Roman Catholic Church as Black and African long before the existence of the English, Irish, Polish, Germans, or Italians as Catholic. Third, I lay claim to myself as a woman equal in grace and beauty to those of European ancestry. I make these claims in the face of centuries of denial of my womanhood, my femininity, my faith, and my race in the United States and its Christian churches.”⁶

Stephanie Mitchem, a Womanist Theologian, in *Introducing Womanist*

*Theology*⁷ is a strong advocate for young unwed mothers who must carry the burden of guilt and shame to such an extent that young unwed mothers are said to fall into physical and deep emotional distress. Mitchem joins other Womanist Theologians whose approach is deeply rooted in a faith and hope story grounded in personal experience and intuition. Mitchem expounds on women who suffer from depression and mental illness and go to such extremes as to do unlawful and harmful things for gratification and acceptance from their men.

Monica Coleman, *Ain't I a Womanist Too? Third Wave Womanist Religious*

*thought*⁸ is characterized as a woman of faith. In other words, Womanist Theologians believe that the God they serve is all-encompassing; infinitely mother and father at the

⁶ Stacy M. Floyd-Thomas, *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society* (New York: New York University Press, 2006) 53-57.

⁷ Stephanie V. Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology*; EBSCO Publishing: eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)-Printed on 9/28/2020 9:39 PM via CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGYebSCOhost.com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/ehost/delivery?sid=b0c145ee-769c-490f19df44d7%40sessionmgr4007&vid=1&ReturnUrl=http%3a%.

⁸ Monica A. Coleman, *Ain't I a Womanist Too? Third Wave Womanist Religious Thought*, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/25166>.

same time, all-powerful and incapable of error. Gender justice continues to be a pervasive subject.

Description of Hypothesis

As Christian women come forward to identify, testify and exercise their faith, Womanist Theology will take its rightful place in the academy as solid scholarly work.

Social Psychology and the Chosen Interdisciplinary Field of Study

With this information, Social scientists are re-doubling their efforts toward understanding and eradicating group antagonists. The volume examines commonalities in ways “out-group” members are treated, not just in extreme destructive actions but in everyday patterns of distancing and avoidance.⁹

Together with the techniques offered by the experts, this project will apply academia with the greatest example of Social Psychology-the ministry of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Jesus chose to socialize with people whose station and place in life were considered by the status quo- (religious leaders) “beneath them.” Jesus was a revolutionary and a liberator. At the same time, other great leaders socialized with the well-to-do, Jesus, as the King of the Jews, chose society's rejected and despised.

Long before the words equality and social justice were coined, Jesus, by example, practiced them over his lifetime. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is depicted as an agent of social change as he goes from town-to-town socializing and ministering to the “least of these (Matthew 25:40),” those rejected and seen living on the margins of society.

⁹ Bernice Lott and Diane Maluso, Editors, *The Social Psychology of Interpersonal Discrimination* (Northampton, MA: Guilford Press, 1995), 232.

There are many occasions where Jesus is seen doing the “unthinkable.” For example, in the Gospel of Mark 5:1, Jesus is seen casting out demons and restoring a man that was demon-possessed. This same man was so inspired and thankful that He asked Jesus to follow him in his ministry. Jesus does not seek men in a bartering or evangelistic fashion in this passage; no, Jesus remarks, “Go and show yourself to your family (Mark 5:1).” In this way, Jesus is appealing to the heart of man that they may know Him in the admonishing of sin, rather than a missionary or bible salesman looking to meet His quota. Jesus insisted that the man go home to his family and tell them how good the Lord has been to him.

The Markan text never lists the number of women who follow Jesus, yet is especially poignant as it depicts Jesus as a man who seeks no glory for himself, one who does not discriminate or show favor. Notice how attentive he is to the Jewish leader, Jairus. Although Jesus is a Jew, there are innumerable occasions when Jesus is seen working with non-Jews, as in the Johannine story of the “Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-39).” The prophetic word of urgency in just this Markan text alone shows that, yes, something “Good can come out of Nazareth,” dispelling what Nathanael once said in sarcasm (John 1:46) about the Messiah himself.

Granting divine favor to women discriminated against is another characteristic of Jesus of Nazareth. Again, Mark carries this theme of Jesus’ granting healing to the sick, life to the lifeless, and inviting those who desire to be made whole a chance to be set free as seen in the pericope of the unknown woman (Mark 5:24-37). Scripture captures this message throughout the Gospels countless times as Jesus goes against gender discrimination, racial profiling, and any bias toward those considered “unclean” or below

the religious leaders and their hypocrisy as seen in the plotting to kill Jesus while at the same time accepting bribes from the Roman government.

Some would depict Jesus as a “nobody,” While others questioned, “What kind of man is this who ate dinner with tax collectors and fishermen?” Where doubt entered in, Jesus merely persuaded those who challenged him to exercise their faith. Countless times Jesus went against the “norm” (healing the sick on the Sabbath, Mark 3:1-6), choosing fishermen to become his disciples in this new ministry, without a resume or character references.

When presenting a person’s character traits in the order of intelligent, humorous, and happy, the hypotheses tend to rate that person as someone good to know. On the other hand, when one is said to be envious, then intelligent, they are rated poorly. Adjectives that ran from bad to good changed the results, forming unpleasant impressions.

“It is interesting, also, that primary effects in forming impressions when admirable adjectives were read first seemed to have more weight than the adjectives that would come later. This is an interesting hypothesis. He contended the order of trait adjectives is important because the meaning of the latter adjective is changed by that of the earlier adjectives. One might call this the assimilation of meanings hypotheses. According to this reasoning, an impression is formed by virtue of the early trait descriptions. As soon as one may say that a person is intelligent, people are forming a general impression of that person.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Bernice Lott and Diane Maluso, Editors, *The Social Psychology of Interpersonal Discrimination* (Northampton, MA: Guilford Press, 1995), 78.

Understanding Social Psychology As It Is Applied To This Interdisciplinary Paper

There has been a great deal of tension in the Church over the lack of understanding of racial harmony and discrimination. One of the most compelling answers comes from social psychology. Unfortunately, people seem to be lazy when it comes to putting more effort into understanding how one thinks and feels.

Just as the example Worchel, Cooper, and Goethals presented in *Understanding Social Psychology*, when a person or group has presented a string of negative characteristics, immediately the receiver of this information sees what they hear first. If it is negative, they remember it because it was heard first. Seldom does the hearer question their opinion.

This then opens a new area for understanding which should question, but does not, what else do you know about this person's character? Or perhaps in the case of choosing a candidate for president, "How did they put together the various bits and pieces of information they have and arrive at a judgment about the two candidates?"¹¹

Social Psychology is an Invaluable Asset for Understanding How People Think

"Social cognition is research that focuses on inferences –attempts to understand these judgment processes. We have learned from this research that human beings are not perfect in their judgment and inferences. Whether this imperfection means that people are basically irrational and thus make a flawed judgment or that they are pretty sound in their

¹¹ Bernice Lott and Diane Maluso, Editors, *The Social Psychology of Interpersonal Discrimination* (Northampton, MA: Guilford Press, 1995), 78.

thinking given the difficulties of meeting perfect standards has been a matter of considerable debate in psychology (Nesbett and Ross, 1980).”¹²

Demonstrate an Example of Interdisciplinary Research and Writing That Can Be Integrated with the Solution of the Project

In six weeks, a research study will be implemented by drawing together those on my peer/professional and contextual list of supporters. One substantial part of this project is to test those volunteers about discrimination and divide them between men and women in ministry using the subject of disharmony in the church and put together a group for and against men and women. The panel will not discuss racial disharmony. No, the main subject for discussion is the lack of women, regardless of color (race) or denomination, serving as ordained pastors in the Church.

The group will be comprised of ten men and women. Half the women panelists will be women who earned their Master of Divinity (MDiv) and Doctor of Ministry (DMin). Vice versa, the other half will be comprised of men who also have an earned MDiv and DMin.

This town hall meeting will take place through zoom and is open to an audience selected from a group of contextual guests (colleagues who may or may not be in ministry or hold academic degrees) but are interested in the project. There will also be a few in discernment waiting to be recognized by their pastors. Lastly, there will be a host of friends making up the audience, those who sit on consistories and church boards in decision-making positions.

¹² Bernice Lott and Diane Maluso, Editors, *The Social Psychology of Interpersonal Discrimination* (Northampton, MA: Guilford Press, 1995), 78.

In practical theology, “Sojourner Truth became an activist for equal rights as well as an acclaimed preacher.”¹³ Truth proved that women are capable of carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders while at the same time preaching the kingdom to come and not crumble or fall, but stand tall through it all.

The women who volunteered on this project are made of that same fiber. This involvement compares to the acclaimed preachers of the first church, Mary Magda, the other Mary, Peter’s mother, Mary and Martha Lazarus’ sisters, Cloe, Priscilla, Eunice, and so many other women whose identity was not included in the Canon. None of these women sought vain glory, yet women today need to know that Jesus held women in the highest esteem as they like young Mary who with an expensive bottle of (nard) perfume used it to anoint Jesus’ feet in preparation for his crucifixion and untimely death (John 12:1).

People like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and a “revising committee” of able astute women composed *The Women’s Bible*, gave voice, and solidified how women -across cultures rose above societal restrictions to prove how invaluable the work of women has been down through the years as they have made significant contributions to the work and construction of both the early church and Christianity.¹⁴

With the Townhall, the first round of meetings, an opinion poll will be devised and sent out to get a consensus of what those who participated think about this issue of

¹³ Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner and Teresa Snorton editors, *Women Out of Order* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), iv.

¹⁴ Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner and Teresa Snorton editors, *Women Out of Order* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), iv.

disharmony in the church as it relates to the lack of women being ordained to serve as pastor, using a qualitative and quantitative approach. This opinion poll is designed to get the overall thoughts and attitudes of how men feel toward women in the role of the ordained pastor. The gathering of statistics will not be able to gauge the morality of the subject of rejection but does reflect how insensitive and demoralizing men have been over centuries as they deny women the same rights and privileges afforded them in ministry based on sexism and injustice.

Prior to the first gathering, the Town Hall meeting, a letter or covenant agreement will be mailed out to each participant, asking that they read it over and sign it if they agree to abide by its rules of respect. The moderator will request that these forms of the covenant be returned in a timely fashion before the meeting. Ten to twelve questions will be formatted, and each person will be asked to review them in advance for the sake of time and order. All care will be taken to respect everyone's remarks and opinions; no answers are wrong.

The meeting will be conducted after each panelist signs an agreement not to bring slander or any other attention at this first meeting. It will break down the barrier of women being excluded as ordained pastors. The Town Hall meeting format: There will be a moderator, a person who has earned an MDiv but chose to work in another field out of being rejected from a church or ecclesiastical body representing a denomination.

One of the first questions put to the group will be: How do they view women serving as pastors in their church? From this answer, we will begin to unpack "issues" they have, whether personal or corporate, and gauge our time together based partly on how their answers shape the overall attitudes or the heart of the forum.

This study on the lack of women in the pulpit of the church is designed to not only address the archaic and chauvinistic practices which have for centuries ignored the gifts and talents of women who desire to serve, but bring the question out of the darkness where the enemy is getting the glory. Using both the qualitative and quantitative approaches, this project may bring resolve.

A young member active in the Yadah Yadah Prayer Group, Inc. has offered to compile the results of the polling data for including it in the final project. After the writer invites the participants, the writer will mail out the questionnaire and take the minutes at the sessions. Finally, a final report will be put together for submission to the DMin Committee.

In these latter days, Christians are focusing on “adapting.” Adaptation is the Committee’s one step towards change; change brings healing and restoration. Disillusions can as seen in the Markan 5 pericope of the woman sick for twelve long years hemorrhaging but are followed by a miraculous healthy change to other women who may need to test their faith out.

The female pastors who have joined this project represent those who, through persistence and tenacity, prevailed and now are ordained as the pastor of a church, but also the few who through great vision and strength trusted God to see them far beyond their flesh, but the desires of their heart.

This research also touches on shattered women who resolved not to pursue ordination, fearing well in advance that the overall experience would be too painful. Some have pacified themselves by saying that, “If God called, then God will equip” and no formal study is necessary and may bring the Church closer to its mandate; to serve

Jesus' Church, "Upon this rock, I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18 proposed a purpose, that is, a sanctified, safe space of worship where all God's children will find that they are welcome.

Asking Questions

"One of the first things a researcher learns in a questionnaire construction is to avoid double-barreled questions, that is, questions in which opinions about two objects are joined together so that respondents must answer two questions with one answer. For example, even a novice survey researcher would wince at a question like, in the coming presidential election, do you support Senator's Pace and peace, or do you support Governor Guerra and par?"¹⁵

Some questions:

1. How do you feel about ordaining women?
2. Do you sit on a committee of ordaining women?
3. Have you ever sat on a ministry team that you felt unjustly treated women for ordained ministry in your years of service?
4. Do you have the authority to overrule a judgment call against a woman being discriminated against?
5. Does the ministry committee on ordaining women have a quota to set on the number of women ordained?
6. If so, what do you believe must be done to change how women are adversely treated for ordination?

¹⁵ Norman Bradburn, Seymour Sudman, Brian Wansink, *Asking Questions, the Definitive Guide to Questionnaire Design for Market Research, Political Polls, and Social and health Questionnaires* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley, 2004), 142.

7. If you sat on a committee that rejected a woman some time ago, is that female candidate given an opportunity to redeem herself today?
8. Now that you are the head of the committee on ministry, would you change some of the discriminating practices that you know held women back for years?
9. Does your committee on ministry follow the strict tenets of the Bible (written some 2,000 years ago on Paul's guidelines in 1 & 2 Timothy for refusing to ordain women to the office of a pastor?
10. If so, tell us what is your position on divorced women with or without children serving as pastors?
11. And finally, does your church offer psychological testing and counseling for men and women going through the ordination process?

After putting together this diverse professional team of women and men across denominational lines and ethnicities, this panel of the clergy will be convened to discuss the number of ways in which they may have wanted to act differently with new candidates to the ordained ministry. What more in-small-group could we do to aim for a more holistic end?

A couple of case studies provided authentic situations to discuss. When using the small group approach of ordained ministers and colleagues, it is will be said that in talking with new candidates, the heart and head may not have been present for "fear" and nervousness. Would it have been wise to review this person based on a one-on-one, saving the candidate from a bad case of nerves?

Search committees have often interviewed candidates, and they failed the ordination questions and interview by their lack of skill, but that is not the case for this research study. Instead, the point here is that many candidates, aged forty to sixty-five years old, have the time and energy to devote to the church but were discriminated against for their late Call.

It is normal to see candidates exhibiting signs of tension and fear. The hands and brow may begin to sweat, and they seem edgy and a bit nervous. However, that may not be a good sign for a preacher's first meeting with their new employers. It just may be the grace the committee on ministry needs to see just how humble and caring this new candidate is as they strive to show their best side. Yet, having not served on a search committee before, it may be wise not to push new candidates if they show signs of undue stress and fear.

Although the body of men and women who pass the ordination tests and become installed as the pastor are not great orators or public speakers, the pastor's office is more than preaching. With time and faith, women have overcome much of their earlier weaknesses, become more vital in preaching, and operated within the overall arc of their pastorate.

Women who have overcome will impact the work of God's Church. There is much room in the kingdom for change. Jesus was a change-maker and renegade for justice. In Jesus, Christians attest to have found strength and their purpose. Women are particularly pointed out throughout Jesus' ministry (Mark 5:25-41).

Within the biblical pericope, theological, and the interdisciplinary choice of womanist theology, the unknown woman who hemorrhaged for twelve years and left for dead, Jesus (representing the heart of the Church), does something no man expects. He recognized the woman's need immediately. Jesus realized that this woman stepped outside of her religious norms, her lack of self-confidence to garner enough strength to say, "I need thee," while pushed towards Him to risk public disgrace and shame.

With this subject of women, rejection and the Church bring out the conversation that has been silenced and “hushed.” When something terrible, it is muted. We discover it is the gate to mental illness and depression. Depression was one of Jarena Lee's problems, the first African Methodist Episcopal (AME) preacher ordained by Bishop Richard Allen had. Lee had a burning desire to share the good news of Jesus with anyone who would listen. Unfortunately, Lee became plagued with mental illness. In Allen's autobiography, he spoke of Jarena Lee and her passion for preaching. While Allen confessed that Lee had such a gift to preach, he also questioned her health, for there were many times when she would talk without any knowledge of her whereabouts. “Daughter by your faith you have been made well” (Mark 5:34).

One of the critical factors of this study is to bring healing to a sick and dying community of faith, God's Church. The researcher will share the final report with the leadership of the United Church of Christ, wherein it may be a source for teaching and a tool to educate its male pastoral membership. Now more than ever, the church needs to improve upon how they honor women as they reach out to them for affirmation and grace. There are quite a few pastors who saw the role of women as Bishop Allen once did. Now Allen's shoes are empty. The question is open, where will the following men of grace come?

The church's leadership has been operating negatively toward its women for far too long. In this season of making “adjustments” and recognizing that God is still speaking, the question of how and where do we go from here can be best answered by those who have prevented growth and denied their sisters the same grace and opportunity the Church offered them.

The research will show through personal testimony from a solid group of professional women ministers that reaching ordination brings with it specific claims of tenacity, perseverance, spiritual warfare, and psychological spear targeted at women to wear them down and push them to withdraw.

The personal testimony and data will support the claim that women across denominations continue to be targeted and wounded today regardless of ethnicity. This behavior and practice of willfully attacking the church's dearest laborers are unacceptable. No church leader in good conscience can sit back and not do something. One of the worst sins is the sin of commission, to know that you have sinned and are not remorseful.

Using the quantitative approach offers a volume of examples to strengthen the project. After approaching more than ten people with similar backgrounds and experiences, this report will show a broad section of the women in ministry and their outcomes leading into becoming ordained. The quantitative approach also provides a broader scope of women pastors across ethnicities and denominations; African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, Catholic, Pentecostal, United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist. Pulling from this wider group considers their church's tenets of faith, rules, regulations, and disciplines. Not one female pastor expressed that their experience was more embracing than the other. Most of the women in the study shared the same problems of facing consistories or deacon boards and challenges to accept their rigid denial of operating under the same power and authority they have given men. It is just not the same for us, female pastors say. Oddly enough, the African American Church seems the hardest on their female pastors. So many of my colleagues complain of being sent to

remote areas to serve, places that are not fit and should have been closed for their lack of safety for a woman and inadequate plumbing.

The quantitative approach will allow the research to cover an in-depth and more intense subject examination. For example, it already has been discussed that many women, though eager and zealous bring to the ministry a few “issues” that hold them back from being free to do true church. That has its own “issues,” for there remain so many qualified, passionate to the call, women who have an enormous amount of faith along with their zeal serve. For this reason, having psychological evaluations do not just apply to women who may become loaded down with past burdens, but emotional strain comes to everyone and should be treated without discrimination.

The barriers that have held the races apart must be torn down. Healing and understanding each other’s culture are paramount to walking and working alongside each other in the Church. With this holistic approach, change will come.

This research has been a tremendous breakthrough. Being more able and willing to share has brought this small group to anchor our hopes in the broader body of the conference. At the Annual meeting scheduled in June of this year (2021), inequality and African American women’s pain will be discussed before the conference. This approach is a bold undertaking, and it likely will be the first of many conversations toward an understanding that when one of us is hurting, all of us are hurting.

Conclusion

Will this study eradicate social injustices to people of color, or will these meetings clear all the pain of the slaughter of black people for what was measured to be four

hundred years? Absolutely not! Yet, this small group of dedicated ministers hopes to gain a bridge to cross over that will allow us to meet at a point of harmony and understanding, not erase the past and pain but find that “Balm in Gilead” to heal the sin-sick soul.

We vowed to work toward a better day where the future is secure, where all God’s people strive to live a life “pleasing and acceptable” (Romans 12:1) where race nor the color of one’s skin is judged, but as by Dr. Martin Luther King preached, judge Black people by the content of their minds.

Remarkably, the Suffragettes thought it was vain to hope to get the right to vote. Yet, today, those brave women not only got the right to vote but earned the right for both white women and black women to serve in the highest offices of government, helping to make decisions for all the commonwealths.

Male chauvinistic attitudes continue to malign and target women, yet let the records show that these women; Jarena Lee, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hammer, Bishop Leontyne Kelly, Alice Walker, Vashti McKinsey, Cynthia Hale; to name a few did what few men have ever done. While the list of African American women of the past is so many, there is a new list for this new study to be applied as a cross-reference of “Promise Keepers” who will bridge the past with future hope.

This new study will take its step into the future, not so much claiming victory over the racial divide, but adding their names to the scholars that have taken the same task to rid the world of hatred and division. Hope is still our greatest desire to bring about change. A panel full of men who serve the church in all its glory has also volunteered to support this research project, *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to*

Ordaining Women. Many of these fine men stood with me through undergrad and seminary studies. These men are my colleagues and friends and will be the scholars who bring a fresh new understanding to patriarchal societal ills.

A few of the men involved in this project also experienced “church hurt” and have an opinion all their own regarding division and disharmony. Yet, they offer only a viewpoint that brings wholeness and restoration. We aim to bridge the gap and not regress but move forward.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The final project began the week of October 15, 2021, developing a list of supporters. The support team began with members of the Yadah Yadah Prayer Group Ministry, a team of women prayer warriors, joining me as they offered their help. One of our members is an executive minister with the Presbyterian Church and works out of Zambia, Africa. She rearranged her schedule to be with me. At the helm is Michelle Elaine Garland, my cousin, who assisted me from the prayer group. Michelle is a young wife and mother, yet she honored me with her time and talents. If the project is a success, it would be because of her faithfulness and love for family.

After I developed a list of ordained ministers to invite, an invitation, composing the consent form and a covenant, it was then that a package was prepared and sent out through the internet. What a breakthrough to have such technology and have Michelle and Davon McMillian, my nephew who lives in San Jose, California, skilled in computer design, create a poster using a QR code containing the eight-week preaching and teaching schedule sessions with their pictures and bios. Another person to be acknowledged is Dr. Viola Martin. Dr. Martin came alongside us to offer instructions on setting up and hosting a Zoom meeting. This Zoom link was then put in place for all eight sessions. Although the information was sent out

with the invitation, Michelle took the time to send reminders to each participant with this link to avoid any hiccups. For example:

Rev. Judith E. Tobias Invites You to Join via Zoom at 6:30 p. m. EST.

Greetings All,

The candidate for Doctor of Ministry, Reverend Judith Tobias, is inviting you to attend a Zoom presentation for her dissertation project. This is the seventh session in this series of teaching and preaching lessons from the book of Mark 5:25-37. This evening's Bible Study will begin promptly at 6:45 p. m., and the teaching will come from Reverend Dr. Rose Irwin, Doctoral Candidate and Associate Pastor in Dayton, Ohio. The Preaching this evening will come from Reverend Dr. Cynthia Thompson, Pastor CME Church located in Columbus, Ohio.

Attached is the flyer for the series, including a QR Code with the Speaker Schedule (October 23 through November 13) and Speakers' Bios. If you have trouble scanning the QR Code on the flyer, please click the following link to access the info.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11slgKEigxFsz07m_vmfAq4_0wr2z2rhV?usp=sharing.

Please use the Zoom information listed below to access the meeting.

Topic: Developing Harmony in the Church as it Relates to Ordaining Women

Time: Nov 8, 2021, 6:30 PM Eastern Time

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/5956877956?pwd=THlaMnlmYUFvVm8zeHRnd01oWW16QT09>

Meeting ID: 595 687 7956

Passcode: nqXCA1

What Objectives Would Be Met With This Project

There are sixty-six books in the Hebrew Bible with innumerable texts to choose from with complex theological issues; for example, Tamar and Judah, Genesis 38:1-30. This story is one of the most painful pericopes for women. The retelling of it, the knowledge that her purpose was limited by a fertility issue, is just one point for my subject, the woman in Mark 5: 25-37. The Tamar-Judah story within the context and culture of the Hebrew people shows how my project text, a woman bleeding for twelve years, was so devalued. The scribes did not feel it necessary to add her name.

The women of that time faced so many layers of pain, yet my subject (if she had children) no one knows. No one stepped from outside the shadows to protect her. No one pleaded her case or even showed the slightest affection for this woman. This motif of women being treated less than human is just another story, but Mark finds it important. And it was for this reason that I chose Mark 5:25-37. This theological sandwich found its place between several other concerns, yet Jesus did not ignore my subject. The societal problem was exposed for the careless and unconcerned way that someone living with an emotional, mental, or even physical problem is treated when they no longer have the means to find help. Addressing the internal and external issues of my subject brought a sense of Shalom peace, as one presenter taught. Women are vulnerable.

The question was raised why have fourteen preachers/teachers used the same pericope? The answer was in this handling of the project. Preachers not only come to the pulpit with their unique styles, but they may exegete the passage somewhat

differently. Preachers may be talented and well versed in all sixty-six books of the Bible yet will not all use the same texts to unpack what they see the LORD has given them to preach. Therefore, with such a sensitive and complex project, the author leaned on Jesus to direct them, guide them to pull out what thus saith the Lord where someone would leave asking the age-old question, what must I do with this text?

This pericope spoke to many “issues” that affect women seeking ordination. This presented layers upon layers, and both the women and the men presenters did an excellent job telling the unnamed woman’s story of rejection, dis-ease, disharmony, and denial. This pericope is the church’s problem, but after hearing fourteen preachers expound on it, looking around the screen, folk were being delivered, folk were being helped, and looking in the chatbox, comments of affirmation were made.

This project was the answer to many prayers. Hope shined through as each session uncovered problems that were kept hidden, and as the presenters peeled away the layers, even they got caught up in the enthusiasm. The result was phenomenal. Each session was well attended. There were repeaters (those who returned after more than one session), and new participants clicked on. Most of the audience were preachers, yet a few women were ministers in training (Women holding advanced academic degrees) with all the academic status yet working toward affirmation and recognition by the licensing and ordaining bodies. Several of those in the audience were colleagues from the United Church of Christ, the denomination with which the author serves. These preachers faithfully took their places in the audience and stood by to listen and learn.

The total expected attendance was approximately twenty people. Fortunately, this number was exceeded by twenty-one people. The breakdown was thirty-one women to

ten men. Although these sessions were not debates, one could not help but notice how transparent the audience became during the question-and-answer sessions. From where I sat, I could see either smiling faces or signs of contentment as the presenters openly answered the questions presented with not just their heads but their hearts. Some of the participants were laughing while a few were crying. Emotions like this brought a sense of fulfillment to this researcher.

The project is over, yet it has been said that this project is far from over. The work thus far has just begun. The question then for this researcher is, will my colleagues take this project seriously? Will this project they took part in be the basis for change within their churches? If we have resolved that something must be changed as it relates to women being ordained, then what or when do you plan to do it?

Methodology

Now that the project has commenced, the last week of the six-week project was set aside to gather the answers to the pre-survey/questionnaires. An evaluation was done from the data returned, and a consensus was made. Out of forty-one participants, four of the ten men answered in this way:

1. How do you define discrimination? Using a characteristic of a person or people (such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and so forth) are against that person or people.
2. Another way it was defined is treating or expressing feelings of or to another person with bias, prejudice and based on perceived, imagined or fundamental pre-conceived ideas regarding their gender,

race, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.

3. And yet another remarked that discrimination is defined by instances when an individual or individuals' voices are muted, rights are abridged, and they are not allowed to pursue positions of importance; power or influence enters in –because they represent a group or multiple groups of people who the majority have been made comfortable and permitted whether implicit or explicitly made to exclude.
4. And yet another is that discrimination is manifested hatred, dislike, and disregard for another person based upon characteristics that the second person has no control over, based upon the discriminator's fear of what the second person represents, and sustained by an unequal power structure between the discriminator and the second party.
5. The last person defined discrimination as prejudicial attitudes carried out in Speech and or actions.

The above remarks to how you define discrimination were made by male preachers in positions of power and authority across denominations that are Baptist and the United Church of Christ.

We asked five women out of thirty-one to respond to the same question regarding how they viewed or defined discrimination; here are five responses:

1. Discrimination is the unfair, harmful, and damaging treatment of an individual or group based on race, gender, age, or sexual orientation. Discrimination for her went deeper for example, as a black woman, there are so many inequities the central part of discrimination begins with “Just

being black.” Black women have faced more complex tokenism or unfair hiring practices, last hired but first fired.

2. Another response to the definition of discrimination from a woman; bias against a group that prevents that group from full participation in society and institutions.
3. Yet another answered this way: When anyone is subject to someone else’s scrutiny on any level; gender, race, age, finance, education, location, faith, even moral issues because everyone has their context and was born into “original-wound” situations with scars that influence one’s negative and positive decisions in life; unjust, unequal, prejudicial treatment, marginalization, exclusion, or oppression of others based on race, gender, age, social status, gender identification/sexual orientation, or any other “classifications” assigned to people.
4. Yet another female pastor felt this way about discrimination: The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of ethnicity, age, sex, or disability. As a Black woman in a society that continues to create glass ceilings for women of color, the unjust treatment comes in many forms and varieties depending on the venue. In her experience, to be well educated, informed, or otherwise too black is also a stigma for fair treatment. In other words, “Who does she think she is?”
5. Discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on race, gender, age, or sexual orientation.

This random selection proved one significant point to the success of the project: First and most important is that men, regardless of denomination or ethnicity, all were within a few words define how they saw discrimination in their culture, work, and life. Few addressed the boundaries of station, place, and person. Unlike the men polled earlier, the women, regardless of denominational differences, all found the effects of discrimination doubly hard and recognized that the unfair and unjust treatment had a lot to do with their sexual orientation.

When asked the men the question, “Have you been a victim of gender discrimination?” Three men answered no, and two answered yes. The two that responded, yes, and gave their analogy of situations where women are expected to be weak or incapable of heinous crimes. Another example is that no man was ever asked to speak on Women’s Day.

When the five male participants then were asked have you ever discriminated against a woman based on her gender? The same target group of men answered four no and one yes. The participant who answered yes told a story of being a minister in the Baptist church where at that time the “mindset” from the older preachers was that the Bible did not support women preachers. Therefore, he did not support his mother at the time when she was going before the licensing board to become a licensed preacher.

Contrary to this last statement, one of the four male participants answered with an overwhelmingly, “No” or “Not that I am aware of.” I have always been a staunch supporter of women and that women should always be treated as equal to men in all areas of life.

The last question asked of the men; “Do you believe that gender discrimination

exists in clerical ministry?” The five participants answered, “Yes.” Three men spoke succinctly but with a sense of humility. One remarked, “Gender discrimination exists blatantly in clerical ministry. It is as much an emotional and mental stronghold as it is a spiritual stronghold. Male pastors and denominational leaders have utilized the current power structure of the western Church to limit, if not outright deny, female ministers and other leaders from taking advantage of any opportunity open to them. If the male pastors and denominational leaders have not been explicit in their gender discrimination against female ministers and other leaders, they have been implicit in discriminating against women. Their constant and continual refusal to recognize that women have a valid and powerful role to play in the administration of the Church and the spreading of Christ Jesus’ gospel has led to many women’s sufferings.”

When this question of whether discrimination exists in clerical ministry was raised, all five women participants experienced it, and yet they offered hope rather than despair. Many hopeful remarks came out of this discussion. So many of the participants recalled incidents where women found themselves pitted against each other.

This act of causing internal problems between women in the church seemed to be stolen from the Deep South and during the period of Slavery. It could be labeled “Mr. Lynch” the white male perpetrator who developed an evil system to control the slaves on the plantations. Mr. Lynch taught the plantation owners this evil system to keep the black man and woman deathly afraid.

Howard Thurman, a notable author, and prophet of olde, preached, “Why is it that Christianity seems so impotent to deal radically and, therefore, effectively with the issues

of discrimination and injustice based on race, religion, and national origin,” Jesus and the Disinherited, 1949.

This attempt to develop harmony in the church can use some of what Thurman unveiled in his study of the fellowship of reconciliation. This topic of reconciliation for Thurman was central to the message of Jesus’ resurrection story. The final week of the sessions ended with two preachers engaging about the Markan 5:25-37 pericope - in a sense - was not so much the woman’s social implications of injustice as one being set apart and condemned as an outcast, but more importantly on the story of his divinity leading believers to the resurrection. This unnamed woman did something not only bold, or against religious laws and Jewish customs, but she touched Him. The woman was not just elevated or made a saint, she was offered a divine place with him in His Kingdom when he said to her, Shalom – daughter, by your faith you have been made well, go in peace.

The overarching message of the text, Jesus is the Messiah that the Jews have been waiting on, he is the vindicator of the world and in Him is peace. Touching Jesus’ garment was a fascinating point, and yes, the book of Acts of the Apostles speaks of how touching the garments of the apostle's brought healing; “Now, God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out of them.”

There are more Bible stories where people were healed, but that was not the message of Mark. Instead, the Markan pericope encourages the believer to see, feel and touch the Master, get to know him intimately, and find out the truth that He is Jesus Christ the LORD.

The religious leader was privileged to see him in all His splendor and be able to tell the truth of who He is, the demoniac verses 1-20, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the LORD has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you. And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and, all marveled.”

The climax for all to see is how she touched Jesus’ garment; she touched Him. Jesus made himself available immediately - to all who desire to know Him in the pardoning of sin and the hour of their need to be set free. Jairus’ daughter was given a chance to a life that her father thought was over; the unnamed woman was restored to a life that she had suffered with for over twelve years and did not follow the prescribed rule or custom come to that rationale. Oh! If only she could touch the hem of his garment. This project came together in all these eight teaching/preaching sessions, and harmony was developed as people wrestled with the pericope to remove stigmas and bring the heart of the gospel to its powerful end; the participants declared Jesus Christ is nearer than we think.

The work with this project brought a true sense of harmony out. It is clear once people put aside their pride, prejudices, denominational differences, and schisms, there is “Therefore, there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” Romans 8:1. All the participants, forty-one, saw this and became one. Everyone across the screen took notice that amid this pain, Jesus was consistent with His word as he made an excellent point; “Go in peace, daughter, your faith has made you whole,” Mark 5:34.

Implementation

The implementation of the project *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women* has as much to do with St. John's as it does to Churches across the county of Westmoreland, Pennsylvania, who are struggling as we are. One of the crippling problems is how many women, such as inequitable salaries and no paid benefits.

The Christian knows that discrimination and racism are moral obligations whose time has ended. With this project, I am reminded that discrimination and racism are immoral. Preachers are "called." We do not have the luxury to ignore or cry for equality. With this project, *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women*, I see my work dismantling schisms, deplorable self-destructive behavior, and all its tentacles while still light.

The conference minister of the Penn West Conference, Reverend David Ackerman, took part in the project of teaching/preaching on the pericope of Mark 5: 25-37. The sessions ran for four weeks with two preachers of various denominations, ethnicities, and academic backgrounds. The sessions met all the author's expectations. Each participant exegeted the same pericope with excellence.

The goal of bringing harmony was an enormous undertaking but was met with success. The focus was on church hurt, exclusion, dis-ease, and discrimination was discussed with the understanding that all this pain must be ended. Participants were comprised of colleagues from both Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and United Theological Seminary. All the participants held advanced academic degrees.

This project for *Developing Harmony to the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women* was the outpouring of sadness over the past twenty years as I saw so many women become depressed and angry due to the rejection received from their churches. The standards were so high that some women seemed to accept that it was not of God for them to go on and give up.

Leontine Kelly, one of the first African American females to become bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, found her way to the office of bishop through years of study and service. It would seem the “game” changed when she decided to begin a career in ministry, yet she did not let it get in the way of her passion for serving.

Although someone urged Kelly to run for the office of bishop after her husband died, it is understandable that seeking a high office in the church is fraught with politics and tension. It would not be hard to understand what Kelly endured to become the first Black woman wielding such power as a female preacher. It would seem being intelligent was not enough then or now. Women were seen just as being “unclean.”

After studying the Leontine Kelly story, I became invigorated. It brought back harsh memories of hearing the pastor say to me, how old are you? I realized that the path to the pulpit would not be easy, yet in my naïveté, I thought it was all about not having the education. So little was this researcher prepared for the truth.

During the Yadah Yadah prayer meetings, this researcher learned one discipline that has kept me: the power of prayer. Richard Foster wrote about the spiritual disciplines of prayer, study, meditation, and fasting. Things changed when this author turned to the Bible and began to pray fervently.

The writer of Hebrews 13:5 gave me the sustenance needed; he will, “Never leave you or forsake you.” With a carefully designed project in hand and recognizing the great need for women to be ordained, it became clear that I had to leave PTS and follow my heart’s desire. The program at United Theological Seminary immediately felt right. I saw my project take form, and after the preliminary course of Synergy, Theology, History and working to implement the project, I have finally realized these efforts were not in vain. Although I had to lose what I had paid to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, I knew withdrawing was the right thing to do.

The project went from October 23, 2021, through November 13, 2021. In some weeks, there were three presentations. This project encompassed a very new and highly technical tool, the CR Code, which allowed all participants to have the calendar of each event with the names and bios of every presenter in advance. The notice with the code displayed the Zoom link and the cellular number for a backup to being unable to get online. No one on my team was skilled with Zoom, yet God prevailed. What a fantastic project. The fourteen participants responded so quickly; although one participant was out of the country in Zambia, Africa, we worked hard to assure her that she was in the number.

In the audience were two of my professional mentors. The overflow audience totaled another twenty-five people. It was so encouraging to have them participate silently. The bulk of the project were participants from the P3-Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Cohort. Several members from the cohort were defending their projects, yet they offered to be faithful to mine as promised. After each session, we turned to questions and

answers. The participants faced provocative and sensitive questions regarding women being denied ordination.

The researcher forwarded Consent Forms and Covenant Agreement Forms to each participant before the project started. These forms were in advance, leaving everyone a sense of relief and trust. For the record, the notes took the responses given from each session is now a part of the appendix with names and identities removed as per United's Internal Review Board. All names and identities were removed. This project of *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women* showed themselves worthy in that every participant realized the hurt and pain every woman seeking ordination has faced. This project opened wounds that had not yet healed. This project became the balm in Gilead.

The audience silently talked from their living rooms and offices. It became evident through their smiles and tears; across cities, states, and countries, that this is a matter that must be heard for healing. Someone remarked telling the truth makes us vulnerable. It took intelligent men, married men, and single men to agree that no woman, whether she is Black or White, young or old, across the denomination, should be discriminated against because of her natural and godly design.

On November 13th, the final session preached and taught by my colleagues reminded the participants that not only did Jesus know in advance of this woman's needs, but He also knew who touched Him. Jesus leaves room for those He loves to do what is right. Jesus showed himself faithful to those who called upon Him. "For the Lord is near to all who call upon Him" (Psalm 145:18).

In the closing remarks made by my conference minister, his exegetical approach was to offer the resurrection through baptism. A new life was born as Jesus allowed Himself to be touched by this unknown woman of great faith. Jesus elevated the woman to the position of a Saint, saying, “Daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace and be healed of your affliction” (Mark 5:34).

Summary of Learning

What new insights have you gained about yourself during this semester?

As I implemented my project for *Developing Harmony in the Church related to Ordaining Women*, I saw another side of myself for the first time. I knew that I championed many causes as I looked back forty-five years ago, a time when I had to raise my two young boys alone. I became a part of a parenting group that took our affordable after-school childcare to the Pittsburgh Board of Education. We mothers lobbied for a program that the board would adopt to include mothers who worked. The program they “saw,” I saw another side myself for the first time.” I saw another side myself for the first time implementing a program designed for women on welfare. They offered a free program to them. The “latchkey” program was horrible. Children were going home alone with a key hung around their necks. I joined a program of concerned single-parents as we devised a plan to board buses and travel to our state’s capital, Harrisburg, and present our case to the State Minority Rep, K. L. R. My passion got me a monthly seat on the State Committee on Children and Youth. We proudly got the State to listen to our complaints. I repeat, children were going home alone with a key hung around their necks. That was

more than forty-five years ago, but those memories flooded my heart as I began this project. The harsh reality was that women preachers dealt with a “massive issue.” I saw another side of myself dis-ease for the first time as they sought to become ordained.

As I prayed and talked this project over with my mentors, each encouraged me to pursue my subject further. Finally, I saw the light at the end of the tunnel with this project, and a door opened. But unfortunately, my own personal “hell” of having to live with rejection brought back a lot of pain. I remember someone told me years ago, “You have a lot of “moxie.”

I partly believe those words helped me see myself as I took their words more seriously and decided to try this subject out and take it for a “spin.” The need is still here, and the issues are still here; I just had to see if the support would also be here. The pursuit of happiness sounds like a fairy tale. Yet, as the project took place in the hearts and minds of the participants, I saw God move a vision of harmony that came together like never before. The issues are no longer hidden behind religious mores or doctrines, the people have spoken, and the church listened.

If I had left this subject alone on the shelf to collect more dust, I would have to admit that I failed miserably in my mission, to “Go” (Matthew 28:19). Unlike a Jeremiah, I do not have a long history of ministers or to myself that I failed miserably in my mission, to “Go” (Matt. 28:19). Therefore, my hope lies in the great crowd of witnesses, Jarena Lee, Sojourner Truth, and even Alice Walker, the women who stepped off the pages of history and did not allow someone to thwart their dreams.

Engaging in this subject on *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women* opened everyone up, including the men. Their testimonies came

through sensitively and passionately. At that moment, I saw –resurrection and a call for a celebration. A letter came through email from one of my Prophetic Preaching and Praxis colleagues. She congratulated me for doing my project in the teaching and preaching sessions. The colleague felt a renewed sense of self-worth. She had hidden her pain of rejection for so long that she forgot how to feel appreciated for her servant ministry.

I learned many valuable lessons as I struggled with the IRB questions and format. Had it not been for that test of my patience, I would have been in a state of confusion when it came to implementing the project. I needed those steps. I needed to prepare a timeline. I needed to remember how sensitive the nature of my project was and be so careful with this project that I would not unintentionally bring hurt, harm, or embarrassment to any of those involved in supporting me.

What new perspectives about your context have you gained during this semester?

Three of my participants were leaders within my conference, the United Church of Christ. The conference minister spoke so poignantly about the issues and the dis-ease for women seeking leadership and ministerial positions within the church. He was so humble as he spoke about the inequities within the UCC regarding salaries for men being higher than that of women. Yet, he did note that the UCC has increased accountability for ordaining women, fifty to fifty percent men. Yet, the overall discussion was very enlightening. The subject of having women equipped professionally and spiritually remains high on the UCC Conference's Guidelines.

What new information have you gained this semester that will be important to your doctoral work?

I plan to use this model of the eight teaching/preaching sessions as a tool for seminaries. The thought occurred that just as church history, spiritual discipline, and the study of ancient languages are required, how much more beneficial would it be if a course such as this project, “Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women,” was offered. With this project, I saw harmony taking place over the eight-week sessions.

I wholeheartedly believe that a project of this nature could be expanded and replicated to become a required course of study for seminaries. The research done proved that the time is “right.” The world is at an “all-time low” as it deals with the racial divide. The church is losing its place in the common denominator of being a Christian. We have offered churchgoers a “pass.” Since the Covid-19 pandemic, we have encouraged all people just to turn on “Facebook” and watch a church service, or even better, use your cell phone and call in to hear a church service. Either way, you do not have to come out to the church; the church will come to you.

The male participants were deeply sorry for what they now recognize as a “chokehold” on women desiring to become ordained. One of the presenters, a young Baptist preacher, wept. I hope that the dis-ease that has run rampant for centuries untreated has run its course and will now be given an antidote for healing, an elixir for harmony, and a strong dose of Jesus’ abiding love for restoration, peace, and resurrection.

Conclusion

From the first semester of getting to know what United expected from its students to writing the first paper, the Spiritual Biography, I must admit that that assignment was the most daunting task. I thought I knew myself and the context of the ministry setting where I serve St. John's United Church of Christ. After six years together, I realized that we still have a lot to learn. I came to St. John's two years after serving its sister church, First Hungarian Reformed in Homestead, Pennsylvania. My undergraduate studies at Geneva College, a Bible College, in Beaver, Pennsylvania, provided a firm foundation in religious studies, which kept me grounded in the knowledge and history of the church universal as I engaged in learning about the Reformed Church. The course of study at Geneva prepared me for community ministry. It provided a well-rounded education in church history, focusing on the Presbyterian Church and its founder, John Calvin, the sixteenth-century church reformer.

Although I was baptized in the Methodist church where its founder is John Wesley, I was eager to learn and did enjoy my time at Geneva as they opened my eyes to the knowledge of so many faith traditions. During my years of study and the piety of John Wesley, I found studying spiritual disciplines to be of significant help and a means to remain grounded in my faith.

Being introduced to the Presbyterian denomination at Geneva was enlightening and taught me much about the church and its religious dogma. Yet it was while at Geneva I became passionate with the spiritual disciplines written about by Richard Foster, a Quaker Pastor. *Celebration of Discipline*. Foster's book inspired me to get to know myself better. By intentionally studying the Bible and learning the importance

of dedicated prayer and fasting, I recognized that memorizing Bible passages is an art form and not done out of some ritual tied to punishment.

This practice helped as I stepped into my new office of pastor at St. John's in Larimer, Pennsylvania. The church has a history of being welcoming and loves to cook. However, St. John's struggles to hold their presence in the community. The industry is no longer there, leaving the families to travel great distances for employment. Even though this community is suffering, God has a plan. With the project on *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women*, the researcher was guided to pray and fast, asking the LORD to honor our prayers and give us the knowledge to understand which path to take and remain viable.

St. John's is among the millions of people across the country facing the sting of racism and discrimination. No matter how far or deep the church is hidden in the valley of Westmoreland County, they are not exempt from the growing pain in its streets. With my project of recognizing the need for more intelligent and trained women pastors, the church just may come away from this hideous dis-ease with just a few scars.

Therefore, my zeal to learn was incomplete, which caused me to enroll at the United Theological Seminary's doctoral program for advanced study on *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women*. St. John's was incredibly supportive and not only wished this author well but lent their financial support.

Theologically, God is no stranger to St. John's, nor is St. John's to who God is in their Christian fellowship. St. John's is struggling in its efforts to remain open and viable. Many churches are in the same position, stuck, and have lost sight

of their purpose. Having an African American female pastor that is not of their nationality nor culture has yet to settle in. It has been beneficial that God is present and offering His grace that we count all joy, recognizing that he would close the doors if God desired. What has helped over these past six years is my compassion for the lost and those left behind, the aged and infirmed. It is with this compassion that we cling together for hope. This hope has kept me faithful to St. John's, for without it, we will lose our way.

When placed at St. John's, it was essential to learn about the people and community as much as possible. Larimer is an old coal-mining town with its peculiarities. Larimer is a proud people with several hundred years of systemic pain. Change for them is seen as crippling, but early in their years, they established themselves as a welcoming church for all young seminarians. My appointment at St. John's comes after many young seminarians who got their initial training and moved on. God is doing something new with St. John's, and it will be glorious. My hope is that He will allow me to see it unfold during my time there.

APPENDIX A
DEVELOPING HARMONY FLYER

APPENDIX A

DEVELOPING HARMONY FLYER

Six Week Bible Series on Mark 5:25-37

Developing Harmony

in the church as it relates to ordaining women.

Oct 23rd - Nov 13th
 Weekly Sessions @ 6:45pm EST
 Saturday Sessions @ 11:45am EST

Each Zoom presentation will begin with bible teaching for 15 minutes, followed by a preached word for 20 minutes and closing with Q&A.



Rev. Judith E. Tobias
HOST



Dr. Viola Martin
Convener



SCAN HERE

- Introductions
- Biographies &
- Schedule

ZOOM EVENT ADDRESS:

- Meeting ID: 595 687 7956
- Passcode: nqXCA1

Questions? Email jetobias1@united.edu

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INVITATION AND COVENANT

LETTER OF INVITATION

Greetings All,

The candidate for the Doctor of Ministry, Reverend Judith E. Tobias, invites you to join and attend a Zoom presentation for her dissertation project at 6:30 p.m. EST. The series of teaching and preaching lessons is from Mark 5:25-37. The evening's Bible Study will begin promptly at 6:45 p. m.

Attached is the flyer for the series that includes a QR Code with the Speakers' Schedule (October 23 through November 13) and Speakers' Bios. If you have trouble scanning the QR Code on the flyer, please click the following link to access the info.
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11slgKEigxFsz07m_vmfAq4_0wr2z2rhV?usp=sharing.

Please use the Zoom information listed below to access the meeting.

Topic: *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women*

Time: November 8, 2021, at 6:30 p. m. Eastern Standard Time

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/5956877956?pwd=THlaMnlmYUFvVm8zeHRnd01oWW16QT09>

Meeting ID: 595 687 7956

Passcode: nqXCA1

COVENANT

This covenant is a blood/oath between me (Judith E. Tobias) and the participants who voluntarily agreed to assist in the above six-week project via Zoom presentations.

All participants must be willing to show the utmost sincerity as we together learn how to bring harmonious change to the Lord's church as it relates to ordaining women.

- Please use "I" statements –for in doing so, it leaves little or no room for error.
- To ensure that equal time is given to each presenter, the monitor will restate the time frame, and at about fourteen minutes into the teaching-remind the facilitator that they have one more minute.
- Likewise, the preacher will be allotted twenty minutes to preach the Word of God. A reminder also will be given that the preacher wraps up within the next five minutes.
- To ensure that all have equal time to share, sometimes we get so filled up and "on fire" the Holy Ghost just won't let you go, but time is running out and as a great preacher once said, "Preaching is indispensable, the length of the sermon is equally important, Gardner Taylor once said, "for a sermon to be eternal, it does not have to be everlasting."
- We all want the time spent together to be fruitful, and bearing that in mind, it is requested that each participant stick to the time commitment and constraints.
- The remarkable Golden Rule is and will be the platform for how we gather and do business, "Do unto others that which you ask to be done unto you."
- If by chance, a word or statement was used which needs more clarity, certainly take the time to acknowledge the statement.
- Lastly, pray for me, yourself, and this project that "The words from my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord my rock and my Redeemer" (Ps. 19:14).

APPENDIX C
PROJECT CALENDAR

PROJECT CALENDAR

October 10, 2021 to November 14, 2021

Week One - Project preparation: write a letter of invitation, covenant agreement, and consent form.

Each participant was sent the three forms in pdf format by an assistant, Michelle Garland. The participants were asked to return their letter of intent within five days. Fourteen people were solicited to cover eight sessions for a period of four weeks beginning from October 23 through November 13. The respondents were a mix of men and women colleagues from The Prophetic Preaching Praxis Cohort of the United Theological Seminary. Four colleagues, preachers, accepted the invitation from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary as well as three from WAMA, the Westmoreland Association of Ministers in Greensburg Pennsylvania of the United Church of Christ. Their names are as follows: Reverend Dr. Sedaric Dinkens, Reverend Lea Tunstalle, Reverend Dr. A. Kennon, 111; Mrs. Catherine Bowser, Rev. Dr. Marco Tinor, Reverend Bobby James Smith, Reverend Patrice Fowler-Searcy, Reverend Paula Cooper, Reverend David Ackerman, Reverend Rentonia Moore, Reverend Dr. Cynthia Thompson, Reverend Dr. Rose Irwin, Reverend Dr. Bobby Seepersaud, and Reverend Mary McWilliams.

Week Two-first session: Saturday, October 23, 2021-11:45 AM to 1:00 PM

10 minutes to open session with welcome, prayer and introduction of the preacher and teacher. A pre-survey sent out for completion.

15 minutes for Reverend Dr. Sedaric Dinkens to teach the pericope and 20 minutes to Preach. During the session we expect to hear God's voice or how God's voice is different than your normal thoughts.

12-15 minutes allowed for questions and answers regarding the sermon and teaching. Participants are asked to turn in their surveys via my email at jtobias@pts.edu.

Week Three -second session: Monday, October 25, 2021-6:45 PM to 8:00 PM

10 minutes to open session with welcome, prayer and introduction of the preacher and teacher.

15 minutes for Mrs. Catherine Bowser (lay preacher, UCC) to teach and 20 minutes for Reverend Dr. Tolly Kennon to preach. During the session we expect to hear God's voice or how God's voice is different than your normal thoughts.

12-15 minutes allowed for questions and answers regarding the sermon and teaching. Participants are asked to turn in their surveys via my email at jtobias@pts.edu.

Week Three –third session: Friday, October 29, 2021-6:45 PM to 8:00 PM

10 minutes to open session with welcome, prayer and introduction of the preacher and teacher.

15 minutes for Reverend Bobby James Smith to teach and 20 minutes for Reverend Dr. Marco Tinor to preach. During the session, we expect to hear God's voice or how God's voice is different than your normal thoughts.

12-15 minutes allowed for questions and answers regarding the sermon and teaching
Participants are asked to turn in their surveys via my email at jtobias@pts.edu.

Week Three-fourth session: Saturday, October 30, 2021-11:45 AM to 1:00 PM

10 minutes to open session with welcome, prayer and introduction of the preacher and Teacher.

15 minutes for Reverend Paula Cooper to teach and 20 minutes for Reverend Patrice Fowler-Searcy to preach. During the session we expect to hear God's voice or how God's voice is different than your normal thoughts.

12-15 minutes allowed for questions and answers regarding the sermon and teaching
participants are asked to turn in their surveys via my email at jtobias@pts.edu.

Week Four-fifth session: Monday, November 1, 2021-6:45 PM-8:00 PM

10 minutes to open session with welcome, prayer and introduction of the preacher and Teacher.

15 minutes for Reverend Rentonia Moore to teach and 20 minutes for Reverend David Ackerman to preach. During the session we expect to hear God's voice or how God's voice is different than your normal thoughts.

12-15 minutes allowed for questions and answers regarding the sermon and teaching
participants are asked to turn in their surveys via my email at jtobias@pts.edu.

Week Four-sixth session: Saturday, November 6, 2021-6:45 PM-8:00 PM

10 minutes to open session with welcome, prayer, and introduction of the preacher and teacher.

15 minutes for Reverend Lea Tunstalle to teach and 20 minutes for Reverend Sedaric Dinkens (replaces Jeffrey Lang) to preach. During the session we expect to hear God's voice or how God's voice is different than your normal thoughts.

12-15 minutes allowed for questions and answers regarding the sermon and teaching
Participants are asked to turn in their surveys via my email at jtobias@pts.edu.

Week Five-seventh session: Monday, November 8, 2021-6:45 PM-8:00 PM

10 minutes to open session with welcome, prayer and introduction of the preacher and teacher.

15 minutes for Reverend Dr. Rose Irwin to teach and 20 minutes for Reverend Dr. Cynthia Thompson to preach. During the session we expect to hear God's voice or how God's voice is different than your normal thoughts.

12-15 minutes allowed for questions and answers regarding the sermon and teaching participants are asked to turn in their surveys via my email at jtobias@pts.edu.

Week Five-eighth session: Saturday, November 13, 2021 –11:45 AM-1:00 PM

10 minutes to open session with welcome, prayer and introduction of the preacher and teacher.

15 minutes for Reverend Mary McWilliams to teach and 20 minutes for Reverend Dr. Bobby Seepersaud to preach. During the session we expect to hear God's voice or how God's voice is different than your normal thoughts.

12-15 minutes allowed for questions and answers regarding the sermon and teaching participants are asked to turn in their surveys via my email at jtobias@pts.edu

Week Six – The researcher gathered data from surveys and completed the evaluations to be added to final project.

APPENDIX D

SIX SESSION BIBLE STUDY SCHEDULE

SIX SESSION BIBLE STUDY SCHEDULE

Saturday, October 23rd 11:45 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST)

Introduction, Rev. Judith E. Tobias, host-Pastor of St. John's United Church of Christ, Larimer, PA, resides in Monroeville, PA, Doctoral Candidate, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio

Convener, Dr. Viola Martin, DNP, BSN, RN-CMSRN

Travel Nurse, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

Bible Study - Reverend Dr. Sedaric Dinkens, Chaplin, Jarvis Christian Church and Jarvis Christian College, Hawkins, Texas

Preaching - Reverend Dr. Sedaric Dinkens

Q&A

Closing Prayer

Monday, October 25th at 6:45 p. m. EST

Convener, Dr. Viola Martin, RN-UPMC, Pittsburgh, PA

Preaching - Reverend Dr. Tolly A. Kennon, III, Esq., Senior Pastor, First Fellowship Charlotte, NC

Q&A

Closing Prayer

Friday, October 29th at 6:45 p. m. EST

Convener, Dr. Viola Martin, RN-UPMC, Pittsburgh, PA

Bible Study - Reverend Bobby Smith

Preaching - Reverend Dr. Marco A. Tinor, Senior Pastor of the St. Paul of the St. Paul Baptist Church, Pittsburgh, PA

Saturday, October 30th at 11:45 a. m. EST

Convener, Dr. Viola Martin, RN-UPMC, Pittsburgh, PA

Bible Study –Reverend Paula Cooper, Presbyterian Mission, World Mission, Regional Liaison for East Central Africa

Preaching – Reverend Patrice Fowler-Searcy, Associate Pastor for Mission at East Liberty Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, PA

Q&A

Closing Prayer

Monday, November 1st at 6:45 p.m. EST

Convener, Dr. Viola Martin, RN-Pittsburgh, PA

Bible Study – Reverend Rentonia Moore, Associate Pastor, Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church and online Chaplain for United Theological Seminary, Doctoral Candidate, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio

Preaching – Reverend David Ackerman, Conference Minister, Penn West Conference,

United Church of Christ, Greensburg, PA
Q&A
Closing Prayer

Saturday, November 6th at 11:45 a. m. EST
Introduction, Dr. Viola Martin, RN, Pittsburgh, PA
Bible Study – Reverend Lea Berry Tunstalle, Pastor of St. Mark AME Church,
Pittsburgh, PA
Preaching – Reverend Dr. Sedaric Dinkens, Chaplain, Jarvis Christian Church and Jarvis
Christian College, Hawkins, Texas
Q&A
Closing Prayer

Monday, November 8th at 6:45 p.m. EST
Introduction, Dr. Viola Martin, RN, Pittsburgh, PA
Bible Study – Reverend Dr. Rose Irwin, Doctoral Candidate, Associate Pastor, Dayton,
Ohio
Preaching – Rev. Dr. Cynthia Thompson, Praise Temple CME, Pastor, Columbus, Ohio
Q&A
Closing Prayer

Saturday, November 13th at 11:45 a. m. EST
Introduction, Dr. Viola Martin, RN, Pittsburgh, PA
Bible Study – Reverend Mary McWilliams, Doctoral Candidate, United Theological
Seminary, Dayton, Ohio
Preaching – Reverend Dr. Bobby Seepersaud, AME Pastor, South Carolina
Q&A
Closing Remarks, Doctoral Candidate, United Theological Seminary, Reverend Judith E.
Tobias, Pastor, St. John's United Church of Christ

APPENDIX E

PRE/POST QUESTIONNAIRE/ TEACHING/PREACHING NOTES AND PARTICIPANT'S LETTER

6

PRE/POST QUESTIONNAIRE

Pre/Post-Project Survey/Questionnaire with 10 Questions

1. How do you define discrimination?
2. How do you define gender discrimination?
3. What would you point out that separate the two (gender discrimination from general discrimination)?
4. Have you been a victim of gender discrimination?
5. If you have, how were you discriminated against?
6. Have you ever discriminated against a woman based on her gender?
7. If you believe you have, how did you discriminate against her?
8. What are some remedies that can be employed to address gender discrimination?
9. Do you believe that gender discrimination exist in clerical ministry?
10. If so, describe in what form; such as, physically or emotionally.

TEACHING/PREACHING NOTES
(Mark 5:25-37)

The First Zoom Session Notes – October 23, 2021 - 11:45 a. m. EST
The Reverend Dr. Sedaric Dinkens, Preaching
“Unmute the Woman and Hear her Well”

On October 23, 2021, the first session of the DMIN project was taught and preached by the Rev. Dr. Sedaric Dinkens. Dinkens so graciously accepted preaching and teaching this first session due to one of the presenters being detained on another project.

The Markan pericope, 5:25-37 started with a power point presentation:

1. Hemorrhaging –uterine bleeding
 - i. Shame
 - ii. Embarrassment
 - iii. Seclusion
 - iv. Ritually unclean
 - v. Isolation
2. Uncomfortable
3. Suffering in silence
4. Nobody felt obligated

Psychologist Louise C. Hawley-the effects of peculiar effects of loneliness: physical, mental, and cognitive health, and so forth. But Jesus listened to her story.

Questions from control group: Meredith Hutchison (retired-UCC pastor) “What nerve this woman had to reach out and touch Jesus.” Dinkens reminded the group that the Bible is used as a weapon...Paul said so much negative stuff that just does not work for us today.

In attendance: Meredith Hutchison, Lee Fields, (colleague), guest of Lee's, Drs. Mary and Robert Walker, Professional mentor, author, Audra Walker, minister in training at Bidwell Presbyterian Church, Collette Jackson, licensed Baptist minister from Uniontown, Pennsylvania, Denise Wiggins, colleague-United, Patrice Searcy-Fowler, Assoc. Pastor, East Liberty Presbyterian Church, Paula Cooper, ordained Presbyterian minister serving in Zambia, South Africa, Michelle Garland, Chatham graduate, Assistant to Rev. Judith E. Tobias and Yadah, Yadah, Prayer Group, Inc., member, Mary T. Brown, Yadah Yadah member, Pittsburgh, Gina Noel Brown, MIT at Bidwell Presbyterian Church and colleague from PTS in Pittsburgh, Paula Papenmeier, member of St. John's UCC, Viola Martin, doctor of nursing at UPMC hospitals, Pittsburgh, and convenor for project, Sedaric Dinkens, DMIN colleague and speaker, Eshika, DMIN colleague, United, Shelia Murray, Boozer, Alabama, Terri Hurd, Baltimore, Maryland, Mary R. Brown, Yadah Yadah member, South Carolina.

Notes from the Second Zoom Session - October 25, 2021 - 6:45 p. m. EST
The Reverend Dr. A. L Kennon, Preaching
Mrs. Catherine Bowser, Teaching

Cathy misunderstood the assignment and left us with little to evaluate on the topic. Cathy complained that she did not feel women needed to be ordained to be good preachers/teachers. Cathy complained that she did not feel man calls and reminded the audience that God calls and God ordains. Cathy is a licensed lay preacher with the United Church of Christ.

We learned that Dr. Kennon's father was a medical doctor. Rev. Dr. Kennon went in search of his father's medical journals and found one that described our subject in the Markan text-5:25-37. Kennon spoke of the medical terminology-homomorphosis.

Kennon researched this phenomenon or bleeding problem learning that it was not just a normal menstrual flow, but something far more invasive.

Kennon recognized that the subject of our text was a woman of means or a wealthy woman to whom the doctor's knew had the money and resources to pay them for their advice and care. Dr. Kennon pointed out that the woman without health care had been taken advantage of by the doctors. Just as he said, so did the church. He pointed out how Jesus called her, separated her from the crowd, and recognized her by calling her daughter. Kennon pointed out how valuable it is to be named, recognized as a member of the family; God's family. We know that prior to this encounter, our subject had been mistreated and ignored, even treated like a piece of property.

After this dialogue, Kennon turned his message toward the church reminding the believer that it is the church's obligation to offer solace and comfort whereby the person leaves bettered by her relationship with the church and, of course, Jesus. Kennon reminded the group in attendance that discrimination has held sisters down. The church needs purging. Once this is done, hope can be found, and one can return to society whole.

Someone in the chat box asked how would I make this subject relevant for men? I ignored the question, but in a private one to one conversation, I explained that men may have their issues, but that is another paper, not mine

Notes from the Third Zoom Session - October 29, 2021 - 6:45 p. m. EST
The Reverend Dr. Marco Tinor, St. Paul Baptist Church, Preaching
Reverend Bobby James Smith, Teaching

The researcher opened this session and welcomed approximately twenty people: Marco Tinor, Bobby James Smith, Patrice Fowler-Searcy, Paula Cooper, Sedaric

Dinkins, Audra Walker, Beverly Weston, Meredith Hutchison, John Welch, unnamed party, Denise Wiggins, Mary, and Robert Walker, Mary S. Brown, Mary R. Brown, Lee Fields, Pastor Burns, Viola Martin, Colette Jackson, and Judith Tobias to the third of seven preaching/teaching sessions of this project. This session was quite lively. My brothers in the LORD, Reverend Dr. Marco Tinor and Reverend Bobby James Smith, did what the LORD laid upon their hearts to expound on; the matters of women in ministry against the backdrop of tremendous issues as it relates to the pericope in Mark 5:25-37. Rev. Smith ended his message with what the subject asked, “Could we bring harmony to the Church and would he be one to admit his role as for or against this glorious step for women?” Smith became transparent and openly testified that he did at one time in his early ministry disagree that women should be licensed and ordained. In fact, Smith regrets today that he stood against his mother when she was a candidate for preaching.

These two preachers sought to deal with issues in the church even as it affected several men, for example, the Ethiopian Eunuch and the proliferated ministry of Ezekiel, who understood the sanctification and called on a minister’s role to safeguard the sheep. This analogy is quite profound.

On the other hand, Rev. Dr. Tinor sought to point out the value of Jesus’ deity as he pointed to the symbolic healing of the subject, the woman with an issue of blood, as Jesus affectionately called her daughter. Tinor pointed out how important this anonymous woman became to Jesus. Ironically, Jesus showed in this text how he could not put all twelve disciples in the position of understanding the plight of certain issues. He reminded the audience when he left the woman to follow Jairus, he only took John, James, and Peter into the home of Jairus. Jesus wanted these three to witness his bringing life back to

the twelve-year-old who had a future and a life to live. Just as he did at the Transfiguration, Jesus had to draw these three out that they might be leaders to impart the Good News.

With this message, Tinor clarified our struggles in the ministry (man and woman) are not the same. And even though men struggle to reach the high calling Christ Jesus, it could never be compared to the challenges of women striving to be affirmed in their call.

Tinor, on the side of not all men, shunned women, pointed out how patient Jairus was as he waited for Jesus to deal with the matter of the woman's healing, how he did not get in the way of this woman's immediate need to be made whole. Tinor surmised maybe because this man was a leader in the church community with a sense of compassion, this man was more spiritual. Lastly, this man came with humility, recognizing that this was a woman with a similar crisis, and trusted that Jesus had the time to also listen to her as he was doing for him.

In closing, when will our traditions as religious leaders of the law present Jesus as a man who has a sympathetic ear to all?

Rev. Smith said our subject pressed her way through the crowd. He outlined from the pericope: Where is your worth? What traditional biases are uploaded? What informs your belief when the texts say otherwise?

In pointing to the Ethiopian Eunuch, Acts 8:26-33, as he read Isaiah, not knowing what he was reading; he was so isolated –not allowed to come into fellowship because of his affliction. When will our traditions, religious leaders, and the law make our LORD Jesus not a Sympathetic ear? He said, “Women should not have ever been held back. He

testified that he is troubled today for not honoring his mother when she went before the church to be licensed.” Rev. Smith testified that he had been trained to object to having women become preachers. He followed the Baptist tradition not to receive women in leadership to preach the Gospel. Today he regrets not being able to apologize to his mother for not supporting her call.

In conversation with Rev. Smith, reminded me that “Scripture supports you; it’s a fight but is not a fight.” It’s the push and the pull, the give and the take. This wants you to fight the traditions that have been uploaded into the text! But sister, Judith, you are a miracle that keeps on unfolding. You’ve lived through stuff that would have killed some people. Out of nothing, everything comes. There are plenty of places you can argue the text. Some preachers fail to embrace the spirit behind the letter. But know this, the LORD anticipates man’s needs.

Rev. Dr. Marco Tinor opened that our challenges are not the same. He spoke to the sympathetic Savior that he is. I like that Tinor uses the word elevated the unnamed woman above the disciples. This statement caused controversy among the participants. Yet, although Dinkens contested these words, I reminded him this program of preaching/teaching was not a debate and that we swore to a blood oath not to cause tension or embarrassment during any speaker's presentation. Praise God this matter of not agreeing did open, healthy debate. Our presenters brought the subject of the woman with an issue that did get elevated; in fact, Rev. David Ackerman referred to the woman as a saint. Additionally, Reverend Cooper and Searcy Fowler questioned why we would not appreciate what happened for this unnamed woman who risked her life to touch Jesus, the holy man, to be made whole.

Dr. Tinor spoke more on the “sandwich” as he recognized the demon, Jairus’ daughter, and the importance of our text. Even though he admitted that women have a tremendous stumbling block thrust upon them, he sympathized and understood that men should recognize women with a call on their life to minister the Gospel of Jesus through the lens that they have formed. Tinor reminded the participants that not all men are the culprits; look at how patient Jairus was as he waited for Jesus to go with him to his house, knowing that his daughter was dying and needed Him immediately.

Notes from the Fourth Zoom Session - October 30, 2021 - 11:45 a. m. EST
Reverend Paula Cooper, Teaching
Reverend Patrice Fowler-Searcy, Preaching

Rev. Cooper, located in Zambia, (six hours) difference in time, joined us Saturday, October 30, 2021, with her exposition of the pericope Mark 5:25-37. Cooper remarked that the unnamed woman in Mark is unnamed, and yes, women are still unnamed. Cooper gave the reasons for why so many want return pay of God’s grace as though we, women, owe the Church something. She spoke of moving from guilt to grace to gratitude. We are influenced by the data, but be the best that we can be and press on. Surround yourself with just three, reminding the listener that Jesus, when entering Jairus’ house. He took James and John Zebedee and Simon Peter. Let the rest leave; in fact, the rest can leave out the back door for hallelujah. They may not mean your ministry any good.

On the subject of disharmony among women, she offered some remedies that were devastating to her self-esteem. The authorities say you are unclean. As she cheered us on, she remarked, women are first to hold you back before a man. She gave the unnamed woman, Veronica.

Isolation –not being in the right company, there is a long line of teaching in the Bible-but hiding our children in closets, under the porch, women are strong and not weak. Hook yourself up with Jesus. Some ask the question tell the truth. We cannot tell our truth to the church, for it makes your reality look suspect. People cannot be trusted to respect our truth. Rev. Patrice Searcy-Fowler embellished that which Cooper taught. Mark's unnamed woman, like all women, is ostracized, underpaid, and underappreciated.

In attendance were twenty. Our remote connection to Zambia earlier gave us problems, but praise God Viola and Paula worked to clear the airways, and we got our connectivity fixed. Although the connectivity to bring Paula in from Zambia, Zoom became troubled. The original persons in the waiting room, which numbered more than twenty, came back under a new connection that Rev. Dr. Dinkens created with approximately eighteen present.

**Notes from the Fifth Zoom Session - November 1, 2021 - 6:45 p.m. EST
Reverend Rentonia Moore, Teaching and Reverend David Ackerman, Preaching**

Reverend David Ackerman: The moment of fear-the woman was found out. The daughter of Jairus and the woman are unnamed. Everyone says she's dead, but Jesus said not so. This is a resurrection story. No name for her and viewed unclean after twelve years, after being looked at by doctors, she is worse. The weight of that frustration compared to his leg pain for fifteen years is incomparable. She touched the hem of his garment, then the moment of fear. Who touched me, and then she was found out. It sets her up as a saint. The Bible said, "She told him the whole truth, and she was liberated."

The connection to healing and believing is not a magic connection. Women have so often been buried by Scripture, but I want to tell you something about the gospel, for it has something to say. We do not lay in the dust. The gospel today allows us to testify. The nameless people of the world get named. Be healed of your disease. There is no more-dis-ease! She finds healing; she finds peace. Remember, she told him the whole truth. Speak God's truth in love, for there is a resurrection.

Reverend Rentonia Moore: Reverend Retonia Moore, "Exclaimed, I am a woman of the Baptist tradition who's going to heal with my doctorate God's church. I am not going anywhere. With this doctorate, I will walk out on my faith, pressing on, and guess what; I will win. Women are winners!" They found themselves woven into the text. She was willing to take a risk. Playing the game is not always fair. When the game is not played relatively, look at Stacy Abrams, who got the governor's seat stolen from her. But what did it do was allow her to flip the state to blue. God has called you to take action. Remember Jarena Lee.

Oh, to be touched by Jesus. Those in attendance fluctuated between 19 and 20: Catherine Bowser, David Ackerman, Meredith Hutchison, Bishop Stevens, Rentonia Moore, Sedaric Dinkins, Bobby James Smith, Robert Walker, Mary Walker, Pastor Burns, Viola Martin, Michelle Garland, Beverly Weston, Virginia Beck, Denise Wiggins, Paula Cooper (Zambia), Patrice S. Fowler, Cynthia Thompson, Mary Brown, and myself, Judith Tobias. Approximately twenty people were in attendance.

Monday's session was what I believe was an incomprehensible, unmitigated truth about how to apply the gospel to this project on "Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women."

Women by the status quo must dare to press on despite the obstacles placed before them to discourage and demean their Call. As so many have remarked, if women who desire to serve God in his church do not challenge this demon; we will remain in this dis-ease for another millennium.

Monday's speakers, Ackerman and Moore, both a man and woman of God whose roles are exemplary in their vocation and personal lives, encouraging the body not to become weary in doing good. I asked Rev. Ackerman if he would ordain women as a note of gratitude. He replied that the United Church of Christ presently has a body of fifty percent (50%) men and fifty percent (50%) women that are ordained, including myself and Meredith Hutchison. Ackerman jokingly looked at Cathy Bowser and mentioned how he tried to ordain her. Cathy holds to the adage that when anointed by God, ordination is not necessary.

Ackerman's powerful address spoke of resurrection and one's baptism. In his remarks, he mentioned that nothing would keep women back who demanded an audience with Jesus. Furthermore, Ackerman remarked, Jesus is a champion for women, even this unnamed woman, as seen with the other women in the bible, for example, the woman at the well, the woman scandalized, caught in adultery, although unnamed; they still hold a place in the Bible.

When questioned about gender inequity and biases toward women, Rev. Ackerman addressed these issues with compassion. He was honest in his approach, recognizing that women continue to be paid less than their male brothers in ministry, and yet we still work for these inequities today with hope for the proper handling and resolve. Ackerman used the word elevation.

This term elevation of endearment for women servants of the church carries a sense of hope that supports the researcher's project: *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to Ordaining Women*.

Our guest, Pastor Burns, commented: Jesus is righting a wrong not endorsed by Scripture, but yet has made a promise. The church has to be diligent about righting wrongs. Pastoring a church may not be popular, but it's God who calls and who ordains.

She also believed as Rev. Moore; our role is to make disciples and do the work of the LORD. Amen.

**Notes from the Seventh Zoom Session - November 8, 2021 - 6:45 p.m. EST
The Rev. Dr. Cynthia Thompson-Predaching and The Rev. Dr. Rose Irwin-Teaching**

Rev. Dr. Rose Irwin, Dayton, Ohio, was well prepared with a power-point presentation on the pericope, Mark 5:25-37. Irwin used eight points to bring her presentation to a sharp conclusion of the Defining Opportunities for Women seeking ordination using the title *Developing Harmony in the Church as it relates to women*. "As women, we find ourselves living on the outskirts."

After giving a little story of her own personal journey to ordination, she talked about a sixteen-year wait. Irwin was licensed in 2003, and it was not until 2019 that her church ordained her. Today she says she is proud that when the door opened for her, she was the only woman seeking ordination. She is now able to say two more women joined the ranks of ordained minister during her wait.

Irwin reminded the mixed audience of men and women opportunities; should not be optional. Irwin defined opportunity: preparation, problem, position, persistence, power, permission, purpose, and practical. In her Bible study, she reached back and

pulled in Jarena Lee and reminded us of her quote: “If a man may preach because the Savior died for him, then why not women?”

Rev. Dr. Cynthia Thompson, Dayton, Ohio, opened with prayer and gave the title of her Message, “Interruption.” “She thought if I had more hours in the day, I could get everything done. I need to clone myself.” She recognized that the woman of the pericope had nothing to lose but everything to gain.” So, she told the whole truth. Jesus acknowledged her as daughter. What happened to Jairus? “You are the parent you decide.” There was suffering. Women are overlooked; take two Midol and get over it.

Using the King James Version of the Bible, Thompson remarked about the “Issue of Blood.” The issue of blood affected the woman’s worship. She could not be around people, the bleeding affected her health, made her weak and fatigued, chest pain, headache, dizziness. This Woman was suffering. Her condition is getting worse day by day, and she had nothing to lose...but everything to gain. She lives in poverty, spent all that she had, and now suffers from poor nutrition. The lady was suffering.

Jesus allowed “Interruption.” We heard the preacher acclaim, “the first should be last, and the last shall be first.” Jarius seemed to be patiently waiting. Perhaps he wanted to see if Jesus healed this woman, then there is hope for my daughter. But Jesus reversed the death process. Every day of this child’s life, twelve years, this woman had been bleeding. He watched her being restored back to relationship, not just restored by the healer, but delivered. Jesus delivered her from the power of death.

Don’t bother the teacher, don’t worry about that! Jesus reversed the process and gave life, just like today-inside and outside, there are marginalized people crying out JESUS. We cannot worry Him, for that would mean we have to stop and address the

situation that would be an “*Interruption.*” The audience began to shout. Irwin wanted to throw her shoe at the computer Screen. Hallelujah, Jesus, for this uplifting and inspiring message. The Benediction.

In attendance:

Reverends Thompson, Irwin of Dayton, Ohio, Reverend Dr. Sedaric Dinkins, Jarvis Christian College, Hawkins, Texas, Drs. Mary and Robert Walker (Faculty mentor and his wife), United Theological Seminary (UTS), Dayton, Ohio, Bishop Lee Stevens, United Theological Seminary colleague, (Texas), Reverend Bobby James Smith, colleague from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (PTS), Virginia, Gina Noel Brown, colleague from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and MIT (Minister in Training) at Bidwell Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Reverend Rentonia Moore, colleague UTS, Tennessee, Mrs. Michelle Garland, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Mrs. Collette Jackson, Licensed Minister, Uniontown, Pennsylvania, Mrs. Catherine Bowser, Licensed Minister, UCC (United Church of Christ), Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Reverend Denise Wiggins, colleague UTS, Washington, DC, Mrs. Pamela King, cousin of Rev. Judith Tobias, Baltimore, Maryland, Ms. Monica Allen-Chapman, retired social worker with Allegheny County, McKeesport, Pennsylvania, Rev. Rose Johnson-Thompson, Yadah Yadah Prayer Group Ministry, Inc., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Doctoral Candidate, Reverend Judith E. Tobias, and Dr. Viola Martin, Convenor and Professional Mentor to sit with Rev. Tobias at her defense, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. (Approximate Attendance: twenty).

Notes from the Eighth Zoom Session - November 13, 2021 - 11:45-1:00 p. m. EST
The Reverend Bobby Seepersaud, Preaching and Reverend Mary McWilliams,
Teaching, Opened with prayer: Isaiah 61: 1- 10 with Reverend Judith E. Tobias

Rev. Mary McWilliams (Prophetic Preaching and Praxis colleague) taught from the pericope, Mark 5: 25-37, “Risking your life to save your life.” Issues: loss of blood, loss of life, ill-suited, exasperated; it was a miracle how this woman survived for twelve years. This woman took matters into her own hands. She was desperate for relief. She heard of a man who dared to challenge the status quo but respectfully challenged to get a different outcome. She risked her life to get a restored life. Moving outside the labels, she chose not to stay in the box. Even in the church –she understood that she was taking a risk to move among the people to just touching, and she had a made-up mind.

She worried about being exposed. She had to be in proximity to reach out and touch. As she pondered, all she needed was to touch a piece of his garment. Determination is key. She put everything on the line to save her life. Public pronouncement restored her to health.

Rev. Dr. Bobby Seepersaud began with how much has already been said about the pericope of Mark 5:25-37. Seepersaud spoke of the Markan Sandwich; the demoniac, a woman with “Issue of blood,” and Jarius’ daughter near death. We then hear his exegesis of the text: Jesus came to minister and give his life as a ransom, I will bring deliverance. The real issue is that on that day, all three situations were unclean by Jewish Law, but Jesus is touched with the very feelings of our infirmities; who touched me! It is not so much being healed by touching the hem of Jesus’ garment, this life-threatening moment is transformative—Seepersaud reminded the audience that this passage must remember that we are seeing the properties of the High Priest, the woman

was heard by faith and faith come by hearing and hearing by the word of God. The woman's faith impacted Jesus' life –as she came in between the two stories of the demonic and the twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus.

Rev. Tobias gave closing remarks as she offered thanks and prayers to everyone who participated with this project, beginning with nephew Davon McMillian, in San Jose, California, who created the flyer with CR code to Dr. Viola Martin, our convenor, and to Michelle Garland, who diligently handled all the clerical work along with sending out the letters of invitation, covenant agreement, and consent forms. Ms. Garland was also on hand to ensure everyone was notified daily of the time and instructions to get on the Zoom meeting.

Rev. Dr. Seepersaud closed with prayer and encouragement to Rev. Tobias as she prepares to defend her project.

In attendance: (Fourteen)

Dr. Viola Martin
Rev. Dr. Lee Fields
Mrs. Michelle Garland
Ms. Bessie Twyman
Rev. Mary McWilliams
Rev. Yvonne Burns
Rev. Dr. Sedaric Dinkens

Rev. Robin Boozer
Ms. Monica Allen-Chapman
Mrs. Pamela King
Rev. Judith E. Tobias
Rev. Dr. Bobby Seepersaud
Rev. Denise Wiggins
Rev. Dr. Rose Irwin

PARTICIPANT'S LETTER

No Name Participant responding to the Survey Questions

Raised Under the Stars of Injustice

How would I define discrimination? Discrimination is the unfair, harmful, and damaging treatment of an individual or group based on race, gender, age, or sexual orientation. That sounds like a simple answer, but the explanation is more complicated than that. As a very young child, I quickly learned the difference about value from my parents, my peers and about how the world works that often stemmed from fear and misunderstanding.

For me, discrimination is difficult to deal with and hard to shake off. I get stuck on episodes of discrimination because of uncertainty about how to handle those experiences. There are two options: You can speak out or complain but are unsure how to go about it eloquently, or you can say nothing at all, afraid of the backlash. So instead, you end up repeatedly thinking about what you should have done. That can stir up and trigger many strong emotions, including anger, sadness, and embarrassment. I usually fall into the latter category, filled with rage.

For example, as a black woman, I am all too familiar with all of these inequalities. We face discrimination for being Black and for being women, and we honorably exist and stand in both identities at all times. The story of Black women is one of resilience, and despite the challenges and barriers along the way, we have accomplished so much and continue to make tremendous strides. Many of us are highly educated, ambitious, and forging our own paths. Our drive to succeed is not just for ourselves but also to lift up our families and communities.

The National Women's Law Center states, "Almost all social justice movements were and are carried on the backs of Black women."¹ We celebrate contributions in academia, literature, music, fashion, social media, feminism, and so much more. We challenge society to be better. As Maya Angelou said in 1978, "Out of the huts of history's shame, I rise. Up from a past that's rooted in pain, I rise."² Unfortunately, Black women have a more complex and worse experience than almost everyone else. We are last hired and first fired, usually working minimum-wage jobs, and promotion comes very slowly. An example we often contend with is being the only Black woman in the

¹ Amani Bethea, *Black Women Built That: Activist Queens Featuring Elaine Brown and Opal Tometi*. National Women's Law Center (February 23, 2018), <https://nwlc.org/blog/black-women-built-that-activist-queens-featuring-elaine-brown-opal-tometi/>.

² Maya Angelou, *And Still I Rise*, Kindle version (New York, NY: Random House, 1978), 190.

room and experiencing a greater variety of aggressions than women of other races and ethnicities. We are paid less than men and most other groups of women, but we can take on the attitude that despite discrimination, we will rise! We will rise! We will rise!

In the introduction, I gave my definition of discrimination, expressing that it is much more complicated. Here I would like to proceed with the difference between gender discrimination and general discrimination. Let me begin by saying everywhere we look, we see differences in wealth, power, and status. Some societies have higher quality and social privilege than others, and inequality as in a caste system. An unequal social system often refers to unfair treatment directed against specific individuals or social groups, referred to as *discrimination*. Discrimination can be based upon various characteristics, for example, age, gender, weight, ethnicity, religion, or even politics, which sometimes go undetected. Racism, sexism, and discrimination often result from *prejudices*, a pre-formed negative judgment or attitude. Bias leads people to view specific individuals or groups as inferior.

In my experience, Black women are more likely than other women to hear people express surprise when they demonstrate strong language skills or different abilities. Black women are likely to have their judgment questioned in their area of expertise. Black women need to provide more evidence of their competence compared to white women and men. As a child, working on my language skills included learning to speak clearly and articulate my words. My parents did not permit slang or what my father referred to as jargon.

Who has not been a victim of gender discrimination? Black women are singled out with unequal treatment and see themselves as objects of collective discrimination. We are a minority group often marginalized, confined to an unimportant or powerless position within society, socially excluded, disadvantaged, and often at the fringe of society, even in the church. As individuals, we are constantly fighting for our rights, for the power to make positive changes socially, spiritually, financially, and personally. Being a victim of gender discrimination is very discouraging, not because of the adversity and harsh conditions I faced but because of the difficulty of understanding how I got myself into that situation. In other words, I blamed myself because I did not speak up. The fear of losing my job and medical coverage for my children kept me in a stressful, tiring, over-worked, and demanding position. For ten years and three months, I was the victim of gender discrimination as a single, working mama of three young children. I worked the third shift and traveled 30 miles from home six nights a week.

I worked as a grocery stocker in a predominantly white upper-class community. Having my name called out was constant, which reflected my position as an employee. Reporting any event to the store manager went on deaf ears. He was not interested in any complaint from me, whether sexual or personally. My locker was spray-painted with the N-word on it. Out of all the floor staff, my seniority was the highest, including the floor manager, and the other employees hated me for it. I was a struggling, divorced Black woman who reported to work every night, stocking the shelves as instructed and regularly working on my back stock. There were nights I would have to unload eight or more

sixteen-wheelers. And the floor manager would often complain that I was moving too slowly. As punishment, he would place me in the dog aisle, where I had to work with large 50-pound bags of dog food and canned goods. I was attending college during the day and working at a well-known grocery store at night. I hated my job, but with limited options, I had no choice but to keep working. The pay was too good to give up, and I tried to handle the name-calling until I could take it no more. I was Black and a woman.

You ask if I have ever discriminated against a woman based on her gender. Absolutely not, I have never discriminated against a woman, but women have discriminated against me. I was either too intelligent, too cute, or too something. Maybe it was because friends and I grew apart. We were great childhood friends, but as we got

I am ALWAYS amazed how Black women are each other's worst critics. We are quick to bring each other down, find each other's faults, and nit-pick at a sister until she has nothing left and nothing to give. And then step over her and call her worthless. We take the prettiest and tear them down for 'thinking they are cute.' Then we turn around and dog the average sister because 'she knows she should take better care of herself.' We call strong women names like aggressive or demanding. At the same time, we accuse weaker women of riding somebody else's coattails. We tell a heavier sister to put down the burger and criticize a skinny woman for not picking one up. We ride the loud woman for talking too much and torment the quiet woman for needing to take up for herself. What has happened to us that we cannot seem to get along or unify to support one another?

I often wonder whether we want to admit it or not. Is there something about ourselves that we do not like? Everybody seems to be out for themselves while everyone else unites against them. I was the mother with three children, broke and broken, divorced, living in income-based housing, struggling to keep the lights on. No one had any idea what I was going through, not the past or current hurt and pains that shaped me into who I was. If my sisters had spent 1/3 of their time building me up, encouraging me, and showing love, that could genuinely have made a difference. PLEASE do not be the straw that breaks another woman's back. There is a woman out there who needs your smile, hug, support, and prayer.

How can we address gender discrimination? My first recommendation would be to focus on empowering women to speak about what life as a female pastor really looks like. Second, they need to reject the myth that churches do not have a problem with sexism. Church organizations have worked hard to denounce gender discrimination, yet at a congregational level, it is still hard to see the results of these efforts. Third and probably the most important thing is that only very rarely have women received seminary-level training on how to face gender discrimination. I would love to have a class at the seminary level that acknowledged that pastoral ministry is not the same when the pastor is a woman. We need to take a look at what the reality looks like for women who are just entering the ministry and what it means to deal with very concrete situations like being called baby or sweetheart by a parishioner. How do you react? How do you handle backhanded comments like, "Oh, you are not bad for a woman" or more blatant

examples of harassment, as when a man comments about your legs or chest? Opening a space of learning and discussion on these themes at a seminary level would help women consider these incidents not as private issues they have to deal with on their own but as public concerns for which the church takes responsibility openly. Just a thought!

I suggest that church organizations become more vocal about speaking against gender discrimination. These women would like to not just have men onstage telling them what gender discrimination is about but to be invited to speak about their own experiences in very real terms. They wonder to what extent denominational policies may be effective in changing congregations' culture because congregations are the place where gender discrimination ordinarily takes place.

So does gender discrimination exist in clerical ministry? Going back to the past, let us look at the movements and success stories of Jarena Lee and Amanda Berry Smith, two early Black women preachers. Jarena Lee was the first female to preach in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Lee faced hostility in her ministry because she was both Black and a woman. She traveled over two thousand miles and preached one hundred and seventy-eight sermons. At the same time, Amanda Berry Smith was a Methodist holiness evangelist, missionary, and founder of an orphanage for children. She traveled overseas and preached in Great Britain, India, and for eight years in Liberia. Her time in Africa was difficult, especially on her health. Both women began to preach and attend holiness camp meetings, eventually becoming well-known for their talents serving many denominations worldwide. Racial and gender discrimination is nothing new.

Of course, women's rights within the church have been subject to longstanding debates that describe how different institutional goals can limit their ability for equality and reform. The church practice is discriminatory and inconsistent with the gender value of equality, although it provides pastoral care for all living. You would expect that things would have become equal and less problematic, and unfortunately, not a surprise.

How exciting it is that older women are now joining ministry! Imagine the life experiences they have to offer and the wisdom that awaits the church. Some might think of it as choosing a second career, but it is much more than that. For most of them, discovering and embracing their calling took years. Their journeys are often made more difficult. Unfortunately, as women, we were raised in a context where women were not allowed to be congregational leaders, let alone preach from the pulpit. Women were always in secondary roles that were not necessarily professionally valued, so they mostly saw men as the legitimate leaders in positions within the church. They did not have the possibility for that kind of pathway until recently and, therefore, pursued other, more gender accepted options for their careers.

We struggle with this sense of unworthiness or not being fit, not being suitable for the role, not being enough. In other words, women's lack of representation in the church enables the stereotypes in which women are considered unsuitable as leaders. Many of them, even the younger ones, acknowledge how they have had to fight against that. Meeting other women and becoming aware that ministry today is made up of an

extensive range of women (young and older), a diverse range of profiles, helped them see themselves in that role. I believe our presence has a significant impact far beyond the four walls of our congregations.

From a physical point of view, women not being fit for church leadership is represented and taught in many subtle but powerful ways. Some women told me about the difficulty of finding clerical clothing that fit them properly. Initially, they had to wear robes designed for men, too long or too big for a woman's body. Yet, some women still wear them when they perform their liturgical duties. It is like a metaphor for what being a pastor as a woman feels like, symbolized by wearing a robe tailored for men. Some admitted that their church members laugh when they wear those robes designed for taller and bigger bodies. It is like a caricature. It highlights how the church has never completely dealt with the effects of women's presence as congregational leaders, making that ill-fitting robe the women's burden. So clergywomen continue to try to find ways to adapt that robe on their own, and it is not an easy task.

Women routinely receive complaints from members of the church who say that their higher-pitched voices bother them and are unsuitable for preaching. And even more frequently, they are made the objects of remarks about their bodies being a distraction for their parishioners, reporting more or less overt forms of sexual harassment. You may think these remarks are rare; they are not. These are just a few ways women feel that they are in the wrong place. The cumulative effect of sexism in the church is that it undermines women's confidence and ability to trust that they belong in leadership roles; thus, lacking confidence may continue for a long, long time if it is reinforced by a congregation.

Mark 5:25-37 tells the story of the woman who bled for twelve years. I see her crippled, back curved, bent at the waist, her fingers twisted shut, and her face parallels to the dirty ground. That was her view of the world. She shuffled her way through the packed crowd. I saw her. She just saw feet. When I read about this woman, I do not see her as a character in a story. I see her as flesh and blood, authentic and relevant, your daughter, sister, mother. God reminded me once again that the women we read about in the Bible were real people, just like you and me. We must never forget that. And while we might not be able to relate to being crippled physically, most of us can connect to being crippled emotionally. We see feet, people passing by going about their busy lives. We see dirt, the mistakes we have made through the years. We see trash, the pain inflicted on us by others, and many times by our own poor decisions.

Jesus said, ²⁸ ‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.’ ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Matthew 11:28-29).”³ Rest for our souls, isn’t that what we all want? What I am saying is this; there are many issues that can cause women to walk around in a bent-over state. They might be your color, your gender, your age, your marital status, your family, or they could be abuse, injustice, resentment, oppression, despair, loneliness, your economic state, or even a physical challenge. The list goes on and on. It makes no difference what has hurt you in the past, it makes no difference how old you were when the trauma affected your life, and it makes no difference what your wealth, position, or status is. Bent and bowed. We have the weight of the world on our shoulders. Little by little. Day by day. Heaviness is too challenging to bear, crippled by shame, fear, pain, disappointment, depression, poverty, insecurity, inferiority, inadequacy, broken dreams. Our walk becomes a shuffle. Our voice becomes a whisper, and our vision becomes a blur.

Who put the chains on this woman in the first place? Is this about much more than physical healing? It is about spiritual freedom. The irons of oppression that held her prisoner to this crippled frame gave way and fell at Jesus’ feet as He unlocked the chains that had her bound. Jesus set her free, and that freedom, which comes in many forms, encompasses so much more than a shedding of chains. Jesus can set us free to live the abundant life by being all He has created us to be and helping us accomplish all that He has planned for us to do. Setting her straight was only the beginning of healing for her. I invite you to reach out and touch the robe of Jesus today and ask for the reminder, the grace, and the knowledge that comes from him. Let Christ find you wherever you are and meet you there, at your lowest lows and highest heights. Remember, you are the hands of Christ and have the ability to offer healing to those who are suffering. Ask for wisdom and pray for strength and courage to overcome discrimination and bias.

³ Michael D. Coogan, et al, The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1763.

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